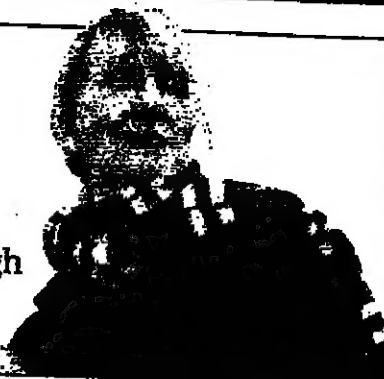


LYNNE TRUSS

My mystical experience at Middlesbrough
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GOLDEN POSTCODES

Areas where you can't buy a house for love or money
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IN FULL BLOOM

Valerie Grove meets the evergreen actress
PAGE 18



TOMORROW

32-PAGE FASHION SUPPLEMENT

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MAGAZINE



Watchdog carpeted on private plans

City ordered to pay up on pensions

By ROBERT MILLER AND PHILIP WEBSTER

THE City's most senior watchdog has been carpeted over "foot-dragging" in the £4-billion personal pensions mis-selling scandal, and been told by a Treasury minister to make rapid and decisive progress towards compensating the victims.

At least 600,000 people are still awaiting compensation, years after being wrongly advised to exchange generous occupational pension schemes for expensive personal plans.

Failure to deal with the problem could jeopardise attempts to privatise the state pension scheme, since public confidence in insurance and pensions companies is unlikely to be restored until all the victims are identified and paid. And as the Government was announcing its Basic Pensions Plus proposals on Wednesday, Angela Knight summoned Sir Andrew Large, head of the Securities and Investments Board, to the Treasury to demand action.

Sir Andrew was given three weeks to "complete a specific round of discussions with the firms with most to do". Mrs Knight said last night: "I am looking for rapid and decisive results from the pensions industry. Targets will be set to ensure that people are put right. Sir Andrew has already said that there can be no more foot-dragging. He demands huge progress in 1997. I will settle for nothing less."

Sir Andrew, who is due to stand down from his £305,000-a-year post in May, is understood to have felt that criticism levelled at his organ-

Labour at 54%

Labour has moved to a 26-point lead over the Tories, according to a Gallup survey in today's *Daily Telegraph*. The poll suggests that Labour has gained five points over the past month with the Tories slipping by six points. Labour is on 54 per cent, the Tories on 28 per cent and the Liberal Democrats on 12.5 per cent.

isation was unjustified. But he himself conceded in November that the initial compensation deadlines had been "missed by a mile". Of the 500,000 "most urgent" cases identified since the review began in 1994, only 25,000 have been completed and £50 million of redress offered.

The Government's proposed reforms of the pension system are dependant on public trust in the private companies that would invest people's life savings and ministers are anxious that the problems that arose from the personal pensions revolution

of the 1980s should be resolved.

Labour raised the question of trust in its response to Peter Lilley's announcement on Wednesday, and today Tony Blair again addresses the regulatory problems of private provision although, writing in *The Times*, he adds: "I do not believe that the mis-selling and high costs that so many have suffered in the past are or were inevitable. They came about because the Government got its partnership with the private sector wrong."

In his article, Mr Blair rejects the central features of the proposed reforms and promises to keep both the old-age pension and the state earnings-related pension scheme for those who want it. Serps, he writes, is the "benchmark against which individuals can judge whether personal provision is best for them".

He does, however, describe the Government's plans as "bold" and as opening up the way to sensible debate. There is an ageing population and unless we plan for that challenge, it could create a serious crisis both for tomorrow's elderly and their children and grandchildren.

Mr Blair's article will be seen as an attempt to counter criticisms yesterday that Labour spokesmen had given a purely knee-jerk reaction in dismissing Mr Lilley's proposals. Conservatives have been delighted by the "negative" response.

Tony Blair, page 18



Douglas Hogg leaves Downing Street yesterday after attending a Cabinet meeting

Hogg denies meat hygiene report was suppressed

By POLLY NEWTON AND MICHAEL HORNSEY

DOUGLAS HOGG moved yesterday to discredit an unpublished and damning report on the British meat industry by suggesting that five of its six contributors were unhappy with the way it was written by its editor.

The report, produced in December 1995, described routine unhygienic practices in abattoirs and gave a warning that *E. coli* — the bacterium that recently killed 20 people in Scotland — was being brought into slaughterhouses via contaminated hides.

According to its editor, Bill Swann — a former Official Veterinary Surgeon — it was suppressed because it would have caused too much damage to a meat industry already hit hard by the BSE crisis.

In a Commons statement prompted by the leak of the report, Mr Hogg, the Agriculture Minister, said it was "a working document" that had not been shown to ministers. He said Mr Swann had been asked to compile the report based on the findings of Hygiene Advice Teams that visited 450 abattoirs in England, Wales and Scotland. Inspections were carried out at the request of the Meat Hygiene Service, an agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Yesterday, the ministry insisted that all the report's recommendations were being implemented, and said a 27-page document, which it released, had been made available in August to farmers and meat industry representatives.

Mr Hogg said: "Mr Swann's first draft was regarded as rather unsatisfactory, and not fully reflecting the views of others who had taken part in the review. Mr Swann was asked to recast his contribution, but was not willing to do so."

Mr Hogg denied that the report had been suppressed. He said a revised version had been circulated within the industry. He told MPs that the review of abattoirs that led to the report was referred to in the Meat Hygiene Service's annual report, published last summer. Any MP who was interested could have requested a copy of the Hygiene Advice Team's revised report, which did not contain a specific warning about *E. coli*.

Mr Swann, a member of the Hygiene Advice Team as well as the report editor, said: "I totally refute the statement made by Mr Hogg that the other members of the editorial group did not agree the draft of this report."

He referred to the document the ministry produced yesterday, saying it appeared to "bear little resemblance" to the draft of more than 50 pages with 81 recommendations which he had last seen in December 1995.

At a ministry press conference yesterday, Mr Hogg said: "The report was not suppressed. It was a working document that had not been shown to ministers. It was made available in August to farmers and meat industry representatives."

Continued on page 2, col 5

Leading article, page 21



"It's a damning report — I think I'm going to have to suppress it"

Gunman takes £700,000 Picasso

By JOANNA BALE

A PAINTING by Picasso worth £700,000 was stolen from a London art gallery yesterday by a man armed with a sawn-off shotgun. He escaped in a taxi.

The oil painting, *Tête de Femme*, was a 1939 portrait of Picasso's mistress, Dora Maar, and was for sale at the Lefevre Gallery in the West End. Its insurers have offered a reward of up to £50,000 for information leading to its return.

The robber walked through an open door into the gallery just after 11 am with a bag containing the shotgun and asked an assistant how much the painting was worth. He told her that he had a shotgun and asked her to take it off the wall. When she refused, he grabbed it and ran outside to a taxi which he had paid to wait.

The driver was ordered at gunpoint to take him to Wimbledon, southwest London.

Jacqui Cartwright, the gallery assistant, said: "He came straight to my desk asking only for that one picture. He looked like an art student with long hair in a ponytail. He asked the price of the painting and I answered him."

"Then he told me he had a shotgun and he wanted the picture. I said 'I beg your pardon'. He said 'Get it off the wall for me', and I said I



Detail from *Tête de Femme*

couldn't. I told him to get it himself, so he did and then he ran out."

Another assistant, Camilla Bois, 28, told how she had chased the man. She said: "I forgot he had a gun. You just think 'Hang on, you're stealing our painting'."

The gallery's managing director, Martin Summers, said the robbery took 35 seconds and was captured on security video cameras.

He added: "Staff were alerted when one of the assistants rang a panic button. They chased him outside where he dropped the shotgun and threatened two people before getting into the taxi."

"I understand that on the way, he stopped at a Halfords store in Battersea as he said he needed to make an urgent phone call. He frogmarched the taxi driver into the shop with the gun still in the bag."

"Staff at the shop said that he could not use their phone, so the man returned to the taxi

and was dropped off at an address in Wimbledon, leaving behind the picture frame."

Mr Summers said the painting, oil on plywood, had been previously owned by the Picasso family.

Mark Dalrymple of Tyler Fine Art Loss Adjusters, representing the underwriters Hiscox syndicates at Lloyd's and Nordstern Art Insurance, said: "The painting will never find a buyer at a serious price. Eventually someone will be tempted by the £50,000 reward we are offering."

Speaking outside the gallery, Detective Inspector Bob Davidge said that Interpol had been alerted. Officers were examining the security camera videotape.

The man was described as being in his early 30s, 5ft 10in, of slim build, with brown, shoulder-length hair in a ponytail. He was wearing brown, tinted glasses and a camouflage jacket, and had a London accent.

Human clones 'in two years'

Human clones could be created in less than two years, Ian Wilmut, the scientist who created Dolly, the cloned sheep, told a committee of MPs. He said researchers would have to be determined to succeed and added that such work should be banned. Page 5

Train derailed

Three people were slightly injured when a passenger train was derailed just outside Newton Abbot station in Devon. Eight carriages of the 1535 Great Western service from Paddington to Penzance came off the track.

Jagan dies

Cheddi Jagan, President of Guyana, died of heart problems in hospital in Washington at 78. A Communist, in 1992 he won the country's first democratic elections in 28 years. Pages 16, 23

His lordship has a day dispensing common justice

By FRANCES GIBB
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

A BURGLAR found himself before the most senior judge in the land yesterday when he appeared at Liverpool Crown Court to be sentenced for his repeated break-ins.

Instead of the usual circuit judge, Paul Eaton was brought before Lord Bingham, the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales. If the accused had heard that the senior judiciary were soft on crime, he was in for a shock.

Eaton, 37, of Edge Hill, who pleaded guilty to three burglaries and an attempted burglary last year while on bail, had been told by his lawyers to expect three to four years. Lord Bingham sent him down for six "The time has come when the public deserve a respite from your continuing offences," Eaton was told. His lawyers are considering an appeal.

Lord Bingham's day at the coalface of the criminal courts continued with fining a seasoned shoplifter in his 60s who stole a jar of coffee £100,

sentencing a man who admitted threatening behaviour to 150 hours' community service, imposing a 12-month driving ban on a man who admitted dangerous driving and stealing a car, as well as giving him 100 hours' community service; and sending a 19-year-old who admitted two burglaries to one year in a young offenders' institution.

A spokesman for Lord Bingham said the Lord Chief Justice was keen to see how the courts operated "on the ground at the sharp end of things, and

he thought the best way to do that was to sit there himself". Today in Liverpool, Lord Bingham will constitute a rare sitting of the Court of Appeal's criminal division outside London — the first time for nearly 20 years.

If successful, the move could lead to regular regional sittings of the Court, with big savings in time and costs for all those who now have to travel to London. Lord Bingham said: "My own preference is for as much work being done in regional centres as possible."

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Bluster-bomb stuns beastly foe — for now

MATTHEW PARRIS
POLITICAL SKETCH

IT'S not that Labour's arguments are stronger than the Tories'. It is more that creeping feeling that nothing is to any avail. Over tea after PM's Questions yesterday I discussed with a former sketchwriter, Andrew Rawnsley, his reverie in which Mr Major is playing a children's computer game. An army of grotesque red cyber-beasties is advancing towards the Tory player, munching their way through walls, parachuting from the air and hand-gliding from cliffs.

For the Major player there are means of counter-attack — exploding tax-bombshells, whammies, double-whammies and killer-rebuttals — but these are in limited supply. Time, too, is running out. And still the Blairite cyber-beasties advance. *Munch-munch-munch* — here they come. They are through the battlements and waiting to storm the fortress.

Munch-munch ... the beastie onslaught went into overdrive at PM's Questions yesterday afternoon. The cyber-assailants ambushed John Major over *E. coli* and a review of hygiene in slaughterhouses. Beastie Leader, Tony Blair, let fly a string of missiles concerning documents, civil servants and recommendations. Whether there was anything in these missiles was unclear, but Mr Blair munched his way forward with such confidence that the effect was to beleague the Prime Minister.

John Major appears to have become a Buddhist. In recent days he has faced attack with a Zen-like detachment, reciting his responses in a kind of trance, relaxed as you please. It would not have been out of place if someone were to have lit a joss-stick, or tinkled a little bell, in the breaks during his increasingly prolix replies. By the end of PM's Questions, Ma-

Major's nerve remained steady, but the cyber-beasties and their Leader were swarming closer.

Next on our screen came a new game: *Hunt the Hogg*. In this game the beasties try to torment and ridicule a Tory dwarf-warrior. Yesterday's game involved the Hogg trying to climb out of a hole dug for him by Meat Hygiene Service cyber-slaves, while everyone else tries to push him back. He held his own.

Munch-munch-munch. On the beasties marched. And then — a shock. An unexpected reverse for the besieging army! The Tories fielded their reserve cyber-weapon: the Heseltine bluster-bomb. A debate on public expenditure was opened by the Deputy Prime Minister.

Seldom in recent months has this weapon been deployed to such good effect. In a series of small explosions and an impressive fireworks display, the beasties were subjected to a withering assault. In one dramatic engagement the Heseltine took out the cyber-invaders' deputy-super-monster, John Prescott, with a salvo of killer-quotes from the monster's recent excursion to the Wirral. The monster's eyes rolled. He was temporarily disabled.

It was a sweet moment for the Heseltine bluster-bomb. Blue eyes blazing and mane (slightly thinning) swept back, the blond bombshell gripped the dispatch box and chuckled as Labour's deputy-super-monster roared. But behind the triumph, I could see fear in the Heseltine's eyes. Any day now, as, revelling in his old skills, he hits the controls, a message will flash on to the screen: "Game Over".

He fumbles for loose change for yet another game — one last game, please God. But his pockets are empty. *Munch-munch-munch* ... on they come.

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August 1993
354,000

July 1995
655,832

Setting the agenda

All this week Westminster has been convulsed by the McAlpine memoirs in The Times, the paper that sets the political agenda.

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Steps to improve meat hygiene 'inadequate'

Children sue ministers over E coli

By POLLY NEWTON, POLITICAL REPORTER

SEVEN children who were struck down by *E. coli* infection last year have been granted legal aid to sue the Government for failing to minimise public risk from the bacteria.

Their lawyers argue that ministers at the Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food must have known of the increasing threat posed by *E. coli* but did not take adequate steps to improve meat hygiene or food labelling.

Between 10 and 15 more cases are being submitted to the Legal Aid Board for consideration over the next week by the solicitors acting for the group, Howe and Co. of London. Lucy Kennedy, of Howe, said yesterday that they would be seeking £10,000 for the pain and suffering caused to the children, with the possibility of a further claim in the future for any child who fell ill again as a result of being infected with *E. coli*.

The bacteria can cause long-term damage to the kidneys, and Ms Kennedy said a kidney transplant for any of the children would prompt a claim for between £80,000 and £100,000. "These children will not be able to get medical insurance now. These parents are being told there is a good

chance their child will require aggressive medical treatment, or they might need to have private medical care overseas, and they cannot get insurance. They are absolutely frantic about it. They cannot do anything to protect themselves."

Among the children who have been granted legal aid to sue are Katie Thomas, 7, and her sister Rachel, 4, who became seriously ill after being infected with *E. coli* last September. Rachel spent nearly two weeks in Alderley Children's Hospital, Liverpool, where she was on a kidney dialysis machine and underwent two blood transfusions. Katie spent ten days in the hospital.

Their parents, Gary Thomas, 43, a Customs and Excise officer, and his wife, Chris, believe Katie contracted the infection from a McDonald's hamburger and then passed it on to Rachel. One of the other cases granted legal aid, involving a girl from Newcastle upon Tyne, is also alleged to stem from a McDonald's burger. McDonald's will be named in the action.

The other legal aid cases involve two children from each of two families who held barbecues in the Stoke-on-Trent area last summer.



Katie Thomas, top, and her sister Rachel, who became seriously ill after being infected last year

Meat report

Continued from page 1

ence yesterday. Peter Soul, head of operations at the Meat Hygiene Service and a member of the report's editorial board, backed Mr Hogg, saying board members felt Mr Swann's draft "did not present a balanced view".

Two other team members last night refused to say whether they backed Mr Swann, and two others were unavailable.

John Major was drawn into the row at Prime Minister's question time when Tony Blair asked: "Why was this report not published on March 31, 1996, as Mr Swann was told that it would be, and why did ministers not see this report and act upon it?"

Mr Major insisted: "There is no question of the report being suppressed. It was a report produced by officials, it was drawn up by the Meat Hygiene Service. It was very widely circulated."

In another development, Professor Sir Hugh Pennington, chairman of the expert group looking into last year's Lancashire *E. coli* outbreak in which 18 people died, expressed anger that he had not been told about the report. He said failure to alert his group to its existence could delay the publication of its report, due out this month.

Mr Blair will today make a manifesto pledge to create an independent Food Standards Agency to protect consumers.

Vicar apologises for 'racist' editorial

By TIM JONES

AN ANGLICAN vicar has been forced to pulp an entire issue of his parish magazine after he was reprimanded for using the publication to express his views on Europe.

The Rev Philip Foster will apologise from his pulpit on Sunday. Mr Foster, a member of the Referendum Party, had expressed fears in an editorial that Britain could become part of a so-called Fourth Reich, swallowed up by the "financially and industrially strong German nation". The front cover featured a picture of Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, with the question: "Is God Warning Us?"

He was ordered to pulp 800 issues of his magazine because of concerns that his views amounted to racism. His opinions, published in the newsletter he produces from St Matthew's Church, Cambridge, were criticised by his superiors in the Ely diocese who warned him he

was abusing his position as editor. Yesterday, Mr Foster, 48, said: "I used the magazine to come out under the flag of the Referendum Party and that was wrong. I shall be admitting my mistake from the pulpit on Sunday."

Mr Foster, who has adorned his vicarage with Referendum Party posters, said: "Because of my personal concerns about the referendum question I decided to make the magazine focus on the issue of Europe. As I am the editor I put forward my personal opinion. I recognise it was the wrong thing to have done and I have said it to the Church."

He added: "What I did was on my own initiative and not at the instigation of the Referendum Party."

Council leaders quit over expenses claims

The two leading members of Labour-controlled Doncaster council resigned yesterday after the district auditor reported that members had wrongly claimed expenses for foreign trips and entertaining. Peter Walsh, leader for three years and a councillor for 15, said he stepped down because "speculation and conjecture following the publication of the report has caused distress both to me and my family". Ray Stockhill, his deputy for the past two years and a councillor since 1980, said his close association with the leader made him feel he should also stand down.

New trial for footballers

Three football stars voiced their disappointment yesterday after being told by the Crown Prosecution Service that they face a new trial on match-rigging charges after a jury at Winchester Crown Court failed to reach a verdict. No date has been fixed for the retrial of Bruce Grobbelaar, Hans Segers and John Fashanu as well as Heng Suan Lim, a Malaysian businessman.

Council workers on strike

Twenty thousand council workers staged a one-day strike yesterday as Scottish councils met to fix budgets for next year. Average tax increases of 13 per cent were expected across the country's 32 councils. The stoppage by members of the Unison union, which claims that 10,000 jobs are at risk, affected Edinburgh, Glasgow and Midlothian.

Sex and drugs teacher jailed

A teacher who supplied drugs to three schoolgirls of 15 and had sex with two of them was jailed for two years yesterday. Stephen Carberry, 38, befriended the girls on a school trip to Holland. He appeared at Kircudbright Sheriff Court after having admitted charges of supplying cannabis resin and of having unlawful sex with two of the girls.

MoD 'needs new big planes'

The Ministry of Defence is too dependent on chartering ageing Russian and Ukrainian transport planes for ferrying British troops and equipment to emergency military operations, the Commons Defence Committee said yesterday. The committee urged the Government to rejoin Europe's Future Large Aircraft programme.

Dog handler wins race case

The first black dog handler in the Prison Service has been awarded £19,500 for racial discrimination over his treatment at Wormwood Scrubs prison. After a ten-day hearing a north London industrial tribunal ruled that Philip Ballantyne had been unjustifiably disciplined and taken off the dog section for a year.

Row over 'sectarian' minister

The political future of Baroness Dutton, the Employment Equality Minister in Northern Ireland, was in doubt last night after revelations that she tolerated sectarianism within her department. She organised the transfer of a Catholic secretary, the victim of harassment by a more senior Protestant, contrary to law in the Province.

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Many white goods have not made light work for women

By NIGEL HAWKES
SCIENCE EDITOR

FAR from liberating women, labour-saving devices have left them spending just as many hours in the kitchen as their mothers or grandmothers did.

When the automatic washing machine, the dishwasher and the microwave oven arrived in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, many believed that women were on the verge of a domestic revolution. Catherine Cronin, a university researcher, said: "But despite this great boom in domestic technology, the hours that women spend on domestic work haven't changed appreciably," she says. "The kitchen is on the go all day: it's constant, repetitive work."

Ms Cronin will tell the Edinburgh Science Festival later this month in a talk entitled "So who's doing the washing up now?" that not only have "white goods" not reduced women's working hours, but they have also given men a new excuse for shirking their share of the chores.

She says that as more and more women took on full-time jobs, reluctant men had begun to take a small share of household responsibilities. The most common chore was washing the dishes. But now men know their home has a dishwasher they are likely to presume their help isn't needed and simply leave the dirty dishes lying on the table.

Ms Cronin, 27, who has a degree in mechanical engineering and an

MA in women's studies, does research at Stirling and Heriot-Watt universities, and lectures Open University students. She says that changing standards in society have added to women's work.

"In days gone by clothes were only washed and kitchen work-surfaces scrubbed when they looked physically dirty. But today when we have washing machines that feature pre-washes and programmes for conditioning clothes and adding sweet-smelling powders we feel under pressure to wash our clothes every time we wear them."

"Men are as bad, if not worse than women, for demanding that their clothes look crisp and fresh, so they throw everything into the laundry basket which their partner then

normally washes, irons, then puts away. Microwaves, too, are a problem even though they were designed to save time, because now most men see them as taking all the work out of cooking, and so sit back while their wife heats up a meal that may still have taken a long time to prepare."

Designers of machines — who are overwhelmingly men — bear some of the responsibility, she says. They tend to go on adding features to machines, rather than designing them to make the work easier. "We need more female designers, or more male designers who do some of the work in the house themselves, and understand it," Ms Cronin said.

"Domestic appliances have taken the labour out of many household tasks but they have not reduced the

time women spend on them. They have also added to the divisions of what is classed as 'men's work' and what is 'women's work'."

"Where once men may have appreciated that scrubbing dishes in a basin was hard work and offered to help, they don't think about the amount of time it takes to clear the table and load the dishwasher; collect the dirty clothes and divide them into colours, whites, and woollens, hang the clothes up, iron them and so on."

"Domestic work may not be quite as rigorous thanks to the new appliances, but it is just as time-consuming because there is more of it to do, thanks to the new demand for higher standards of hygiene that the machines have brought."



Women today are just as likely to be stuck in the kitchen as were housewives back in the Sixties

'Fuddy duddy' Mothers' Union seeks new name

By EMMA WILKINS

THE Mothers' Union is considering changing its name after a survey of members described the organisation as "fuddy duddy", "holier than thou" and over concerned with "tea-making and trivia".

The union, a cornerstone of the Anglican Church since its foundation in 1876, has seen membership fall in Britain by 100,000 over the past ten years to just 140,000 members. The survey, carried out by NOP, found many members felt the organisation was "too cliquey" and "almost like a secret society". Special derision was reserved for the name "Mothers' Union", which members felt was inaccurate and anachronistic.

The harsh judgements, which were disclosed just days before Mothering Sunday, were presented to members in the union's magazine, *Home & Family*. Margaret Duggan, the magazine's editor, writes in the spring edition: "The research painted a bleak picture of ageing membership, lack of dynamic leadership, a resistance to change, loss of practical value and prestige and an organisation out of step with today's environment and the changing role of women."

Many members felt the age of members was too high. Mrs Duggan added: "The general image of the Mothers' Union is of an elderly organisation,



Lady Eames taking the survey seriously

so cliquish as to be regarded almost as a secret society and of no relevance to younger women."

Lady Eames, worldwide president of the Mothers' Union, said the trustees were taking the findings of the survey "very seriously indeed". While acknowledging that the membership had declined in Britain, Lady Eames pointed out that overseas interest is strong, with 750,000 members worldwide.

"There is enormous enthusiasm for the Mothers' Union in other parts of the world. What we are finding in the UK is reflected right across the board among all women's organisations. There are now so many things competing for women's time and interest and

commitment that I think they are being very selective about the organisations they are willing to join or be identified with."

Lady Eames said it was "very possible" the name "Mothers' Union" would be reconsidered. "The Mothers' Union is very proud of its past, but for the first time, the signs are there of a leaning towards a change of name," said Lady Eames, whose husband is the Archbishop of Armagh.

The Mothers' Union, which is one of the world's largest Christian organisations, has always regarded itself as a defender of the sanctity of marriage. Divorced women were not allowed to join the Mothers' Union until a change of rules in 1973.

In 1974 a new Royal Charter for the organisation was granted that allowed anyone baptised to be a member, including unmarried mothers and men. In 1993, the Mothers' Union opened a branch in Holloway Prison. Nine women prisoners with babies promised to uphold the organisation's aims, including a commitment to bringing up children in the life of the Church.

There are 5,558 Mothers' Union branches in Anglican parishes in Britain and the organisation works in 150 Anglican dioceses in other countries. At midday each day members are expected to join together in prayer.



Toni Bradley describes the compliments she received on her first day back

Teacher returns to class as woman

By DAVID CHARTER

A SEX change science teacher who took his last class as a man on Valentine's Day won compliments on her return to school yesterday wearing black tights, a long wig and a short black skirt.

Toni Bradley, who teaches biology, chemistry and physics at St Peter's Church of England School in Exeter, said she enjoyed her first day back despite the occasional gibe by pupils.

A dozen parents wrote to the school expressing concern when the former Tony Bradley announced his intention last month to become Ms Bradley. But they were outnumbered three-to-one by letters of support and a petition.

"It has been a very good day," said the 37-year-old at the end of the school day. "Everyone has been very kind."

"I have had many compliments about the way I look. There have been a few comments but teachers do get barked every now and again. I ignore it and give it the contempt it deserves."

Ms Bradley said her major concern in class was in controlling her voice, which tended to deepen if she had to shout at rowdy pupils.

Mark Perry, the head teacher, wrote to parents that Ms Bradley had been diagnosed as having gender identity disorder, and should be treated as a woman. Her complete transformation could take 18 months.

Family split by lottery jackpot

By DAREH GREGORIAN

THE NATIONAL Lottery tore a struggling family apart when a woman who had just won a £1.3 million jackpot changed the locks on her door and dumped the father of her two children to pursue a life of luxury, a court was told yesterday.

"She's taken away everything that was ever important to me, our love and our children. If we hadn't won the lottery, we'd still be together, poor but happy," David Jones said.

Mr Jones, 34, is suing his former common-law wife Lisa Lee, 30, for half of her winnings, using Legal Aid representation, even though he told the court he had been defrauding social security benefits.

The couple won the prize on April 29, 1995, when they were both receiving state benefits and living on £200 a week in their council home on the Mayhill estate in Swansea, Cardiff County Court was told.

His barrister, Carolyn Walton, said that Mr Jones, an unemployed carpenter, and Miss Lee, a former cleaner, had a stable relationship for 11 years and "were living together as man and wife until July 1995, when he went to visit his mother and brother in Bournemouth. Around that time Lisa changed the locks of the flat and the relationship broke up."

Mrs Walton said the couple "shared their household finances, including the purchase of lottery tickets and he is claiming half of these winnings. Mr Jones accepts that at times he was living at a separate address to Miss Jones. He says that was done to maximise the amount they could claim on benefits because they were able to get separate housing allowances."

"He realises he could be incriminating himself by giving this evidence, and may be liable to prosecution, but he is willing to accept the consequences in order to give all the facts to the court."

"Mr Jones says that if he is successful with this case he will go to the benefits office and repay all the money which is owed to them as a result of the fiddle. If he loses he will not be able to repay the money and could face prosecution. But it is a risk he is willing to take."

Miss Lee and her two children, aged 6 and 2, have moved into a £300,000 cliff-top home overlooking Langland Bay with a Jacuzzi, sauna and swimming pool. The case continues

Gabrielle called in murder trial

THE pop singer Gabrielle yesterday told a court that her former lover — who is accused of murdering his stepfather — was a kind and considerate person. Gabrielle, real name Louise Bobb, was giving evidence for the prosecution on the third day of the trial at Nottingham Crown Court.

The prosecution allege her former boyfriend Anthony Antoniou, and another man, Timothy Redhead, killed Walter McCarthy, 59, and dumped his headless body at a beauty spot off the A57 in the Peak District. The head was discovered in woodland in Bedfordshire.

Gabrielle, who has a son by Mr Antoniou, arrived at court by taxi and smiled briefly at the child's father as she took the stand. She told the court that he was not an aggressive person and had treated her well. She said her relationship with Mr Antoniou had begun



Gabrielle said that her former lover was kind

on a business footing but they had later become lovers. "He was a kind and considerate man who would spoil me rotten," she said.

Mr Antoniou, a Greek Cypriot, began seeing Gabrielle in

1992, the court has been told. It is alleged that, after the killing, he turned up at her flat in Lewisham, south London, "out of the blue". While staying there, he is said to have set fire to his Nissan turbo car, which was allegedly used in the murder.

The prosecution has claimed that Mr McCarthy, who married Antoniou's mother Aphrodite in 1979, was probably attacked from behind as he sat in the front seat of the car.

Mr Antoniou has told police that Mr McCarthy boasted of being unfaithful to his stepson's mother, and said that he had abused children.

The jury of five women and seven men listened for almost an hour as Dr Clive Bouch, a Home Office pathologist, listed almost 60 injuries to the body — including 52 stab wounds. He said several of these had cut through bone

and major internal organs, and one had virtually severed a hand. The beheading was the result of several blows from a weapon. Under cross examination from James Hunt, QC, defending Mr Antoniou, Dr Bouch said the decapitation had probably occurred after death, or "during the process of dying".

Gabrielle said that, although Mr Antoniou had attended the birth of their son in April 1995, their relationship by then had ended.

She said she was aware that on Mr McCarthy had been found dead eight months later on December 23, and she had seen a picture of Mr Antoniou, whom she had last seen at the birth, on the television news.

Mr Antoniou, 30, from Parsons Cross, Sheffield, and Mr Redhead, 29, from Woodhouse, Sheffield, deny murder. The trial continues today.

Hats off to jobless secretary who was inspired by Thatcher

By PAUL WILKINSON

AN UNEMPLOYED secretary who took Margaret Thatcher's advice and set up her own business has won her fight against officials who tried to close her down.

In 1986, June Jordinson used her £1,000 savings and secured £40 a week from the Government's Enterprise Allowance Scheme to set up a hat hire service from her home in Darlington, Co Durham. The business blossomed, until a complaint from a neighbour to the town's planning department.

Darlington council ordered Mrs Jordinson, 62, to apply for retrospective planning permission and then turned down her application in spite of a 200-signature petition from other neighbours and custom-

ers. The planners followed up with an order to cease trading.

Yesterday she learnt that her appeal, which she conducted herself before a Department of Environment inspector, had been successful. "I am absolutely delighted, not just for me but for all the wonderful customers who wrote in supporting me. Justice has prevailed," she said.

"I want to carry on the business until I am 65 and my pension and life policies come into force, and I will retire to the seaside. If I had been forced to stop now I would be unemployed again and it would ruin all my retirement plans."

"The business does not earn a great deal. It keeps me ticking over but I couldn't afford to open up a shop. I thought I had done everything

by the book when setting up. This all started because of a single complaint that visitors caused traffic problems, but that just isn't the case. There is only one visitor at a time, as everyone is given a one-hour appointment."

Mrs Jordinson, a divorcee, was made redundant in 1986. "I got the idea of a hat business after hiring one for my daughter's wedding. It was a time when Margaret Thatcher was encouraging people to set up, so when I visited the job centre I applied to join the Enterprise Allowance Scheme," she said.

Clients can choose from 500 hats bought from some of London's leading milliners. She makes her own trimmings, so one hat can suit several outfits. Once they have passed their best they go to Oxford.

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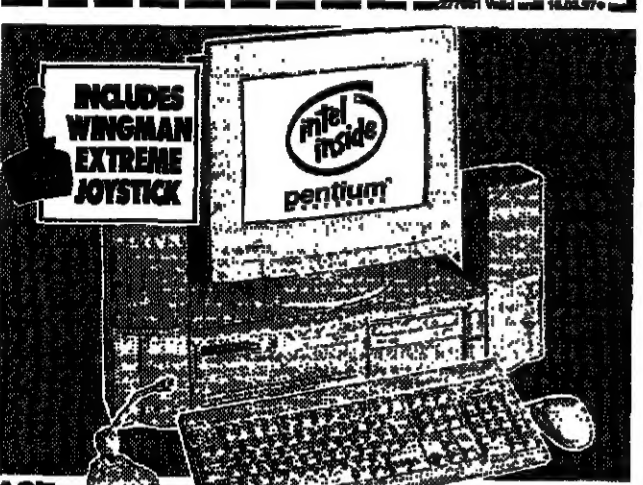
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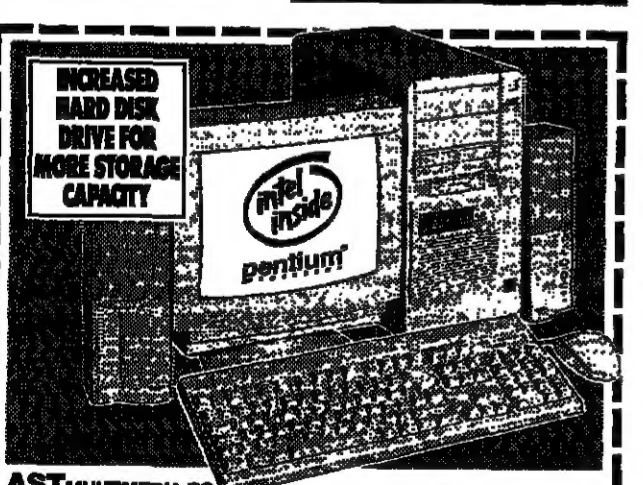
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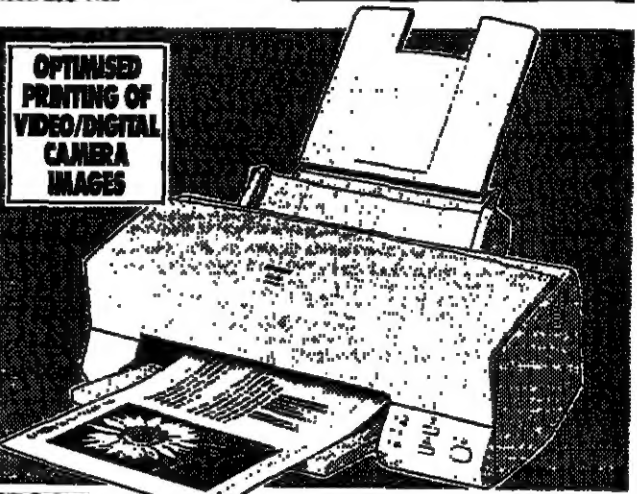
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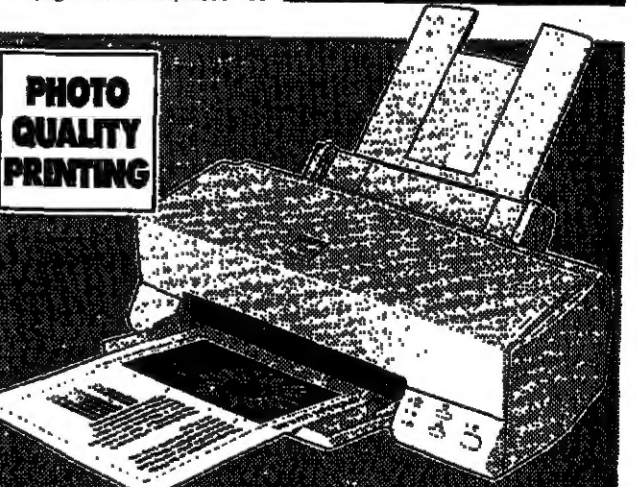
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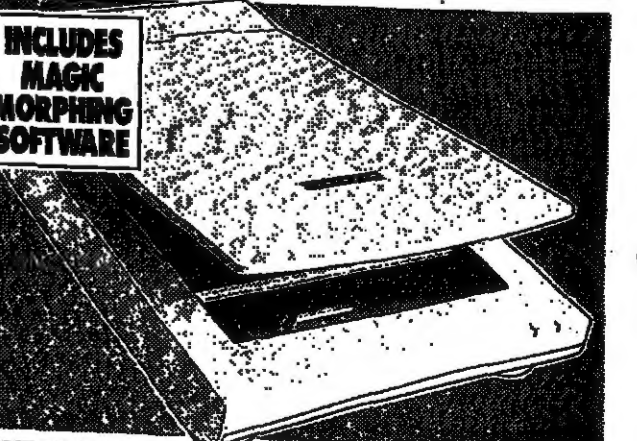


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When shedding 4½ stone requires nerves of Steel



Lady Steel and Sir David in her days at 15 stone

THE shedding of 4½ stone in nine months by a 15-stone Lady Steel rivals the dramatic weight loss achieved by her husband's political opponent, Lord Lawson of Blaby, when he was on a diet. When he shrank to a shadow of his former self, those who did not suspect he had some terrible wasting disease wondered about the lifestyle that frequently leads to obesity in politicians.

Politicians' lives, if they are to keep in contact with opinion formers, tend to revolve around eating and drinking. It requires great strength of will for even the most humble backbencher to reject all that is offered, and the temptations must be much greater for a former Chancellor such as Lord Lawson.

Even being careful, drinking at formal lunches and dinners would represent a weekly alcohol intake of 70 units, which the most liberal doctor would consider too much. The calorie intake from this drinking, as well as from the rich food served, would be enough to keep a miner working at the pit face.

It is not often realised that politicians' wives, as well as the MPs tucked away in Westminster, are faced with



MEDICAL BRIEFING

Dr Thomas Stuttford

their own temptations to eat too much. Clinical obesity is every bit as dangerous to middle-aged women as it is to men, as they are no less liable to develop cardio-vascular disease once the menopause is over, and to suffer diabetes. They are also more in danger from osteoarthritis of the knees and hips.

The temptation for the wife who finds herself abandoned in the constituency is not the result of being served slap-up meals at L'Escargot or the Savoy; instead it centres on the larder in her own kitchen. After Sir David Steel had left his Scottish constituency on a Monday, Judy Steel spent her time restoring the family house, Aikwood Tower, in Scotland. But an interest in bricks and mortar would not have compensated for the loss of her partner's company at weekday meal times. In the lonely weeks which Lady

Steel must have endured while her husband was in London, the pleasures of comfort eating must have proved every bit as beguiling as the entreaties of a Savoy waiter.

Losing 4½ stone has revolutionised Lady Steel's appearance, and she is reported as saying that it has given her an entirely new image of herself. She has revitalised her self-confidence, is no longer self-conscious in company, and when by herself in the fitting room of a boutique, can look in the mirror with pleasure.

She was given a target of 10½ stone when she started attending Scottish Slimmers, which she never thought she would achieve. But nine months following a pre-planned programme and suggested dieting recipes saw the pounds fall away. Lady Steel's diet would

delight the Health Education Council, for she has not lost weight so quickly that she has endangered her health. The diet has resulted in a weight loss of around half a stone a month, about 2½ a week, which is the approved medical rate. Weight loss for those who have the strength and will to continue with this regime, results in a reduction in their obesity which is likely to be maintained, so that the patient has the great satisfaction of knowing that once the diet is over they are less likely to put on the pounds again.

Very low-calorie diets — around 800 calories a day — have come in for criticism, but although Lady Steel, 56, did not adopt one, they can have a place in the battle against obesity. Any low-calorie diet must always be designed so that it contains enough protein to protect the essential organs, including the kidney and heart, from damage which might occur from excessive protein loss, and they must include a full complement of vitamins and trace elements. Ideally however, the seriously overweight should all follow Lady Steel's example and stick to a standard, well-balanced diet, but eat — and drink — less.



Revitalised, and 4½ stone lighter, after 9 months

Clones of humans 'possible in two years'

By Nigel Hawkes, Science Editor, and Tom Rhodes in Washington

HUMAN clones could be created in less than two years, the scientist who created Dolly, the cloned sheep, said yesterday — although he added that such work should be banned.

Ian Wilmut, of the Roslin Institute in Edinburgh, told MPs that he believed the technique could be applied to human beings, if researchers were determined. Appearing before the Science and Technology Select Committee, Dr Wilmut was asked how easy it would be to clone a person.

"I've hesitated to make predictions, but I'm sure if you really wanted to do it you could do it," he said. He told the MPs that his team had used more than a thousand unfertilised eggs to clone Dolly, and this was a measure of the difficulties to be faced in cloning a human being. "But if you were prepared to make that sort of effort, you would expect to make significant progress in one or two years."

He said that everyone at the institute and PPL Therapeutics, the company collaborating with the cloning research team, believed that such work involving human embryos would be offensive and should be prohibited.

Professor Graham Bullfield, director of the institute, pointed out that in 15 years there had been no attempt to apply genetic modification to humans. But he could see "in extreme" circumstances where someone somewhere might attempt human cloning.

Dr Wilmut said the suggested applications for human cloning made no sense. "The idea that you can bring back a child, that you can bring back your father — it is simply nonsensical. You can make a genetically identical copy, but you can't get back the person you have lost." The scientists said that cloning work on farm animals would continue. America's chief of medical

research yesterday opposed a proposed ban on human cloning in the United States. Dr Harold Varmus, director of the National Institutes for Health, said that while he found the idea of cloning experiments personally "offensive", society might find it morally defensible under certain conditions. If the technique were ever perfected for humans, he said, it could be employed in rare circumstances such as infertility in couples wishing to have genetically related offspring. In testimony before Congress, Dr Varmus said: "Maybe there are some situations in which we would find it ethical."

His comments came as House Republicans, defying President Clinton's earlier request to delay any action for 90 days, introduced two bills to prohibit all human cloning. Mr Clinton this week implemented a temporary federal ban and urged the private sector to impose a voluntary moratorium on experiments while the National Bioethics Advisory Commission considered the issue.

After Dolly was cloned from cells removed from an adult ewe, researchers in Oregon announced that two rhesus monkeys had been cloned from embryo cells.

Vernon Ehlers, a Republican congressman for Michigan, said it was essential to introduce prohibitive legislation that would prevent public concern leading to a ban on all genetic research.

Dr Varmus, however, said that unless laws were very carefully drawn by Congress they could wreck valuable research that might save lives in the future and lead to greater food production on farms. The Senate is to debate the issue next week in hearings that will include testimony by Dr Wilmut.

Letters, page 21

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PRUDENTIAL

Buckingham Palace can now be visited from home as the Queen joins the Internet

Royal Web site answers most common queries

By ALAN HAMILTON

THE secret that cyberbuffs have spent a week desperately trying to crack is officially out. <http://www.royal.gov.uk> is the Queen's official address on the Internet.

Access to the royal Web site, inaugurated by the monarch's gloved hand pressing a button at Kingsbury High School in Brent, north London, yesterday, gives 35 million subscribers worldwide 150 pages of information on the British monarchy, including a section answering the questions most frequently put to staff at Buckingham Palace.

People want to know the strangest things. The Web site satisfies curiosity about two common queries: why does the Queen keep corgis (because her father did); what is the most exotic animal ever owned by the royal family (a Nubian giraffe given to George IV in 1827).

Most of the information on offer is in a lighter vein. The Web site offers a history of royal palaces, an explanation of the Queen's role in the British constitution, royal finances, forthcoming royal engagements, opening times of palaces and exhibitions and biographies of members of the Royal Family.

Diana, Princess of Wales has her own extensive entry, in which it is explained that "the Princess continues to be regarded as a member of the Royal Family", but the Duchess of York is relegated to a passing mention in her husband's life history.

For the time being, electronic conversation with the monarchy is one way, and users have no opportunity to ask their own questions or to send messages of support — or opposition.

An e-mail facility is being considered, but as the Queen already receives an average of 300 letters a day by post, palace officials are uncertain whether they could cope with a flood of electronic mail.

demanding instant answers. The Web site, properly known as The British Monarchy, and introduced with a picture of the Imperial State Crown, will also act as a market research tool, whereby users can leave their name, nationality and age group, and offer a brief comment on the quality of the service.

In a speech to school staff and pupils, whose backgrounds included almost every country in the Commonwealth, the Queen spoke for all the dinosaurs among her subjects whose grasp of information technology is still restricted to the telephone.

"I am sure that some of you have parents and grandparents at home who have found the Internet and the World Wide Web to be a bit of a mystery," she said. "But the Internet is rapidly becoming part of everyday life and, used properly, it opens the door to a huge range of knowledge which has no national boundaries. It is important that we

The Duchess of York is relegated to a passing mention in her husband's life history

all learn about the Internet, and get the most benefit from it."

Phillip Snell, the headmaster of Kingsbury school, said that from today groups of children would be given the royal Web site address and it would be introduced in lessons where possible.

The Queen, who is reportedly rather less computer-literate than her husband, praised the

global electronic information network for making it easier for people to learn more about each other, in Britain and around the world. She will pursue the theme in her annual Commonwealth Day message next week which will, naturally, be available on the royal Web site.

In April, a history section will be added to the royal Web site: designed to meet national curriculum requirements, the section will include a history of the Crown from Anglo-Saxon times and a selection of historic speeches by English and British monarchs.

The Queen was shown around the school, which places great emphasis on computer technology, and saw pupils examining computer data from their own weather station on the roof and matching it with computer-generated weather maps taken from satellites.

She saw other pupils using computer information to learn chemistry, and yet more exchanging messages with Nakina Public School in Ontario, Canada, hooked up to Kingsbury by a computer and live video link.

It was there that the limitations of technology were finally unmasked. The Queen pressed another button on a computer mouse to send a message of greeting through the Internet to the Canadian school. It would, she was assured, take only four minutes to get there and there would be an instant reply. "It's rather fun to be able to talk to people such a long way away," she said intrigued.

But there was an inexplicable delay, possibly caused by overexcitement in Ontario. By the time Nakina had pressed the correct button to send their return message, the Queen had left and was on her way back to Buckingham Palace. She who keeps corgis cannot be hanging about when they need to be fed.



The Queen arriving at Kingsbury High School to launch her Web site, whose address is marked by a crown

THE BRITISH MONARCHY
THE OFFICIAL WEB SITE

This is the official Web site of the Monarchy in Britain. We hope you find your visit informative and enjoyable.

How the Palace is made to click

<http://www.royal.gov.uk>

The royal Web site designed by the Government's Central Office of Information is far removed from the gimmick-ridden sites of other recent launches.

One of the few advanced aspects enables users to download the Queen's family tree dating from the birth of Queen Victoria; otherwise the simplicity means that it will be easy for even the wobbliest Internet surfer to navigate. Every page is headed with the royal crest on a crimson bar.

Palace officials have taken advantage of this direct line to an estimated 35 million Internet users to include the full text of press releases issued from Buckingham

Palace. On the commercial side, the site gives information about the royal palaces and estates, including details for tourists such as opening times and admission charges for the Buckingham Palace State Rooms.

In line with the site's restrained nature, it has avoided online booking, as used by some of the more modern Internet sites, and instead provides telephone numbers for credit card booking by more traditional methods.

But many thousands will be satisfied by just a virtual visit. And anyone as snobbish as Hyacinth Bucket will be delighted at the opportunity to sign the site's "visitors' book".

Grapefruit makes a great start to the day

EATING fruit at breakfast can give an energy boost that will last the morning, because its vitamins and natural sugars are released into the bloodstream more slowly than those from sugary cereals. Grapefruit, now in plentiful supply, is a good source of vitamin C and potassium. The pink varieties are sweeter. Choose weighty fruit, which will have more juice.

Promotions include:
Asda: pork chops £2.99 a kg, frozen haddock fillets in crumb £1.99 for 800g, figs 39p for two, black seedless grapes 79p lb.

WEEKEND SHOPPING

Budgens: pork chops £3.72 a kg, whole fresh chicken £2.72 for 1.5kg, large eggs 99p for 12, red potatoes 99p for 5kg, Empire apples 49p lb. Co-op (CWS): sirloin steak £8.99 a kg, haddock £4.99 a kg, mangoes 69p each, blue stilton £5.95 a kg, pure orange juice £1.75 a tr.

Harrod's: chicken and herb pie £1.79 for 100g, Bayonne ham £3.79 for 100g, Spanish artichokes £1.99 for two.

Feeders: smoked salmon ring £4.99 for 380g, sliced green beans 99p for 500g, baby carrots 69p for 500g, double chocolate cheesecake £1.49 for 400g.

Marks & Spencer: £1 off all prepared joints of beef, lamb and pork, chicken breast portions £3.29 for four, mini Melton Mowbray pork pies £1.29 for six.

Sainsbury's: rump steak £7.49 a kg, chicken breast fillets £7.99 for eight (1.18kg), meat lasagne 69p for 300g, mature Cheddar £2.09 a lb, parsnips 35p a lb, white potatoes £1.39 for 5kg, green cabbage 19p a lb, clementines 65p lb.

Sainsbury's: boneless shoulder pork £2.19 a kg, New Zealand shoulder lamb £3.45 a kg, iceberg lettuce 59p each, grapefruit 29p each, red seedless grapes 99p a lb, Somerset pork chump steaks £4.38 a kg, chicken thighs £1.99 a lb, lamb chops £10.09 a kg, new potatoes 14p a lb, courgettes 49p a lb, celery sticks 59p for 300g, large yellow melons £1.39 each.

Tesco: beef fore ribs £5.19 a kg, boneless rolled pork shoulder £2.29 a lb, haddock fillet £1.95 a lb, hoppers 99p a lb, salmon steaks £2.05 a lb, rainbow trout £1.87 a lb, Golden Wonder potatoes 59p for 2.5kg, plums 69p a lb.

Waitrose: chicken legs £1.99 a kg, diced steak £2.29 for 340g, ground pork £1.99 for 500g, carrots 69p a kg, Wilja potatoes 99p for 2.5kg, small vine tomatoes £1.49 for 300g, lemons 99p for eight, fresh orange juice £1.99 l.

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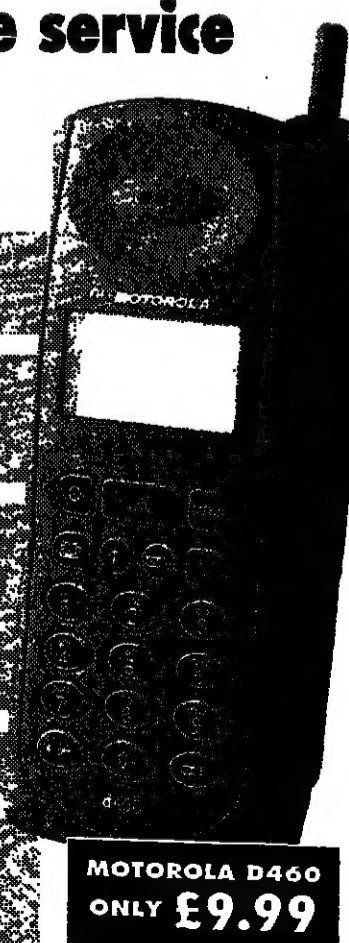
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Talkland

Buyers offer sealed bids for scarce properties

Home sellers earn bonus from 'golden postcodes'

BY KATHERINE BERGEN
AND GLEN OWEN

ESTATE agents say "golden postcode" areas are emerging in Britain where the number of buyers far exceeds sellers and it is almost impossible to find a house. Some areas have an average of 11 buyers for every new home for sale, according to a survey by Black Horse Agencies.

Earlier this week a three-bedroom cottage in Eland Road, Battersea, south London, went on the market for £185,000 with Foxtons and in six hours 21 people had viewed it and four offers of the asking price were submitted. It sold the following day for more than £200,000 after sealed bids.

The fastest selling areas are Alton in Hampshire, Cambridge, Chelmsford in Essex, Southampton, Richmond in southwest London, Slough, Norwich, Derby, Guildford and Lechliffe, Hertfordshire. The average number of viewers for each house from the time it is put on the market until it is sold ranges from three in Derby to nine in Slough and up to 14 in Richmond.

Traditionally expensive areas of London are experiencing the boom, according to Louise Hewlett of Aylesford. Houses in Chelsea that would have taken months to sell two years ago can now be sold instantly. "We would give our



eye teeth to get an instruction on houses in Tregunter Road or The Boltons," she said. "In one recent case we offered someone £1 million over the market value of their family home and they still refused."

Once unfashionable areas are also becoming attractive. Richard Crosthwaite, a partner at Knight Frank, says money is rippling out from central London as far as Tooting to the south. "Houses with five or six bedrooms on the north side of Tooting Bec Common or off Trinity Road might have increased as much as £100,000 in the last year," he said.

Some price rises can be attributed to peculiar local factors. Hilary Wade at Winkworth's said that the "bonus culture" in the City had pushed up Islington prices. "Islington is an historically undervalued area, and the bankers are pouring money into it," she said.

Simon French, from Copping Joyce, said that house prices were soaring in Barnsbury, Tony Blair's Islington neighbourhood. "A house in his area worth £450,000 last year would now cost £525,000 at the very least, but they are very hard to get hold of. Once people go somewhere like that they do not want to move anywhere else."

Foreign buyers are also a significant presence in London. Philip Green at Goldschmidt and Howland, said that the effect of newly-acquired Russian money was being felt in many areas.

"Russian cash buyers can afford multimillion pound properties in Bishops Avenue, a favourite of the Sultan of Brunei. There these enormous houses with high walls, sweeping drives and servants go to them for up to £25 million. No one else gets a look in," he said.

"People from different coun-

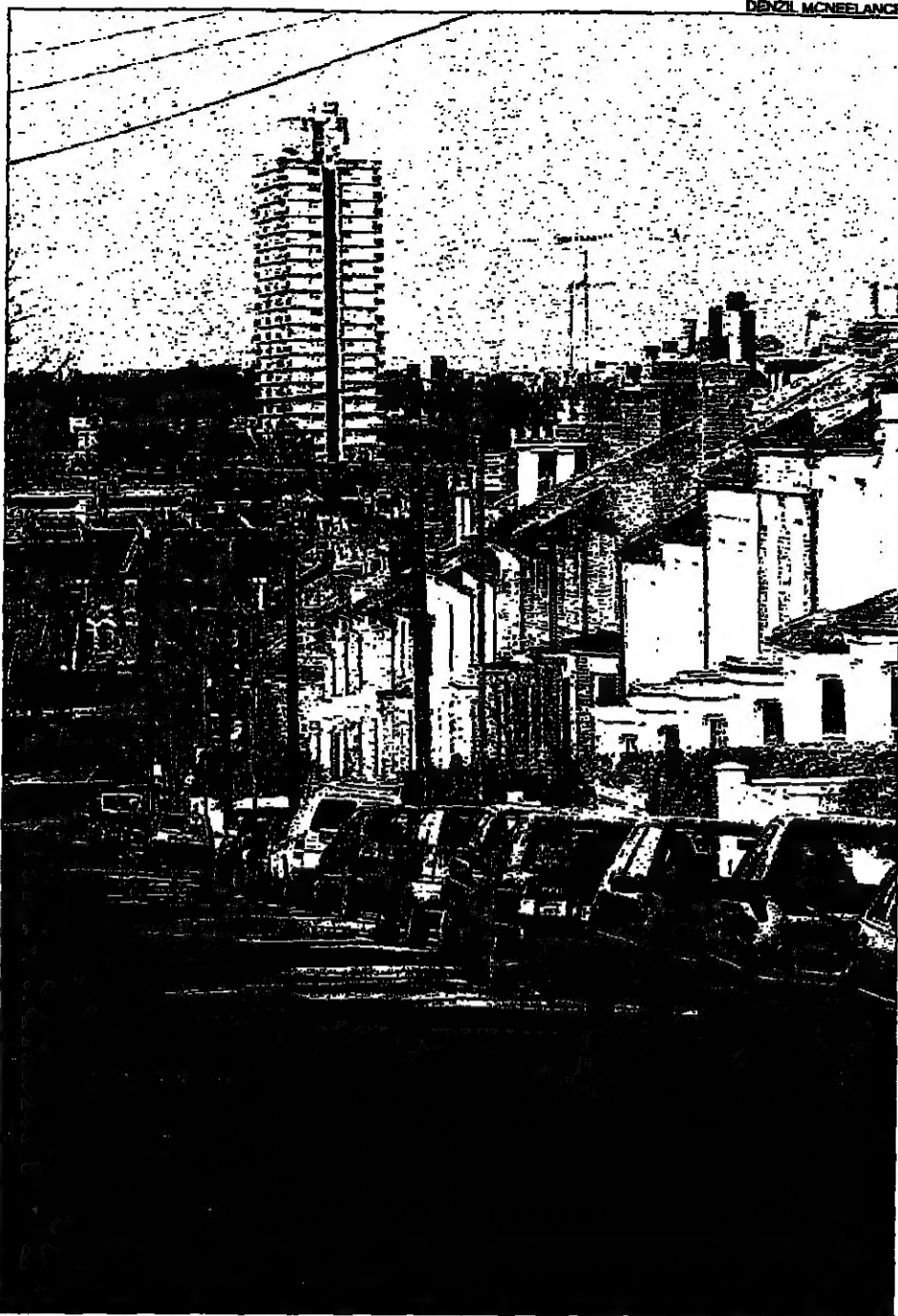
tries seem to have their favourite areas. There is also a lot of Russian money pouring into Fimlico, mostly cash buyers," Ms Wade said.

Hong Kong buyers are coming to Winkworth's Islington office, keen to invest in British housing because of doubts over the Chinese takeover.

Property speculators are pushing up prices in Blackheath in south London, pinning their hopes on the millennium exhibition at nearby Greenwich and the Jubilee Line extension. Money is also coming from the number of businesses relocating to Canary Wharf. Ms Wade said: "Many of the big banks are moving out to the wharf. Citibank being just the latest. That is having a huge effect on Blackheath, which can be reached quickly by car from there."

Colin Fitzgerald from Hamptons said that properties in Alton, Hampshire, were selling in only three weeks. "It isn't just Alton but the surrounding villages like Bentworth and Ropley as well that are moving so fast."

Richard Smith of Savills says anything within a mile of the station in Sevenoaks, Kent, is in huge demand, especially with private roads and priced over £400,000. Good local schools are also a big draw. "Modern and older properties alike which meet these criteria sell virtually overnight," he said.



Eland Road in Battersea, designated a "golden postcode" by estate agents; a house advertised at £185,000 recently sold for more than £200,000 amid furious competition

Troubled academics started fatal fire

TWO academics facing financial ruin died when they set fire to their rented home as bailiffs were on their way to evict them, an inquest was told yesterday. The couple locked themselves into their house and started six fires.

Dr Nigel Gauk-Roger and his wife, Dr Edwina Burness, both 46, owed thousands of pounds in rent arrears when they died last October. Just hours before their bodies were discovered in the burned-out bedroom of the farmhouse, in Six Mile Bottom, Cambridgeshire, Dr Gauk-Roger assured the property management company that he would comply with the eviction order. When the bailiffs arrived, the couple were locked inside their burning home.

The inquest at Histon, Cambridgeshire, heard that the couple owed £2,744 in arrears to the letting agents Camflats. Alan Baggott, of the company, told the hearing the couple had been given every opportunity to sort out the financial mess.

A post-mortem examination disclosed that the couple died of smoke inhalation and that Dr Burness, a part-time English lecturer at Anglia Polytechnic University, had terminal breast cancer.

Recording open verdicts on the couple, the Coroner, John Smith said: "It is quite clear that this was not a fire that was started by an electrical fault or discarded smoking materials. There is no doubt in my mind this was started deliberately."

Au pair's lawyers condemn police

FROM QUENTIN LETTS
IN NEW YORK

LAWYERS representing Louise Woodward, the British au pair charged with the first degree murder of a nine-month-old baby in America, complained that she was not being treated fairly by the Massachusetts judiciary. The police were "squeezing" evidence, they said.

Miss Woodward's counsel said that the local police started with the assumption that the 19-year-old killed Matthew Eappen, the little boy she was looking after. Officers "worked backwards" from that hypothesis, attempting to squeeze the investigative results into a pre-conceived pattern supporting their initial conclusion, according to the Boston law firm of Silverplate and Good, which recently took over Miss Woodward's case.

Miss Woodward has admitted shaking Matthew Eappen before he died, out of frustration at his incessant crying, but denies any intent to kill. Prosecutors believe they can show a pattern of abuse.

Matthew Eappen's mother, Deborah, criticised local the local Mayor and others who have called for Miss Woodward to be granted bail, claiming she represented "a very high flight risk".



Littlejohn takes over Baker slot

BY ALEXANDRA FREAN

THE outspoken newspaper columnist and television presenter Richard Littlejohn is to take over from Danny Baker, who was sacked as host of Radio 5 Live's Saturday lunchtime football talkshow yesterday for making abusive remarks about a referee.

Baker is to join Talk Radio to present a Saturday afternoon football show. The two men will not compete head on, however. Baker's show will go out between 5.30pm and 7.30pm. Littlejohn's from noon to 1pm. Littlejohn said yesterday: "I want the programme to be controversial and the fans won't be getting an easy time from me."

Letters, page 21

The tramp spurns job that lady won for him

BY ADRIAN LEE

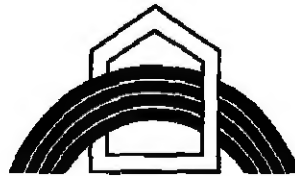
SHE was a wealthy aristocrat, he was down on his luck, begging in the street. Huddled against the cold with only his aisan dog for company, the plight of Oliver Lomasney touched Sara Apsley.

Not content with handing him £1 on the streets of Cirencester and buying him food, Lady Apsley helped him to land a labouring job. But yesterday, the tale of the Lady and the Tramp had an unhappy ending. The 35-year-old walked out of his job after less than three weeks.

Mike Suggs, site manager on the Cirencester bypass for Road Management Services, who agreed to employ Mr Lomasney, said: "He just didn't turn up for work one day. I'm afraid there are a lot more deserving lads round who have had a far harder background than him."

Lady Apsley, 31, of Cirencester Park, refused to be downcast. "I gather he has found a happier path. He has met up with his former girlfriend and they have got re-engaged. For reasons of his own he has decided the life and job here were not for him." Friends who were involved in protests against the bypass had also put him under pressure, she said.

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Irish pen pushers lose their civil war

By Audrey Magee
IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

IRELAND'S army of civil servants will be held accountable for their work for the first time and sacked for under-performance in the greatest shake-up of the civil service since British rule.

Irish government workers, who number nearly 20,000, will no longer be able to blame their ministers for their own incompetence. In the Public Service Management Bill published yesterday, staff will be punished if their work is inadequate.

The civil service set up in 1924 by the Irish Free State was based on the British system. However, it gradually grew out of control with employees in jobs for life and responsible for nothing. Workers — no matter how lowly — could only be sacked if the entire government agreed. This seldom happened as politicians were lobbied in rural areas by relatives of the civil servants. If the civil servants lost their jobs, the politicians lost their votes.

Colin Gallagher, a senior civil servant involved in drawing up the Bill, said: "We have probably had an over-compassionate attitude to non-performance over the years. If the civil servants put obstacles in the way of dismissal, then we would probably let them sit there for 20 years until they were ready to retire at 65."

The Bill allows for the replacement of government department secretaries by secretaries general, who, for the first time, will be given responsibility for achieving specific policy targets set by ministers. Secretaries will be able to hire and fire employees. The Government will only be involved in the firing of very senior servants.

But the proposed changes are viewed sceptically by former employees such as the 70-year-old playwright Hugh Leonard. He spent 14 years until 1959 shuffling papers in the civil service. Still holding "a black affection" for the civil service, he said: "Mine was the civil service from hell. It was depressing, full of petty tyranny. But once a civil servant always a civil servant. I do not hold out much hope of a new dawn."



The changing of the guard on the newly cleared Horse Guards Parade yesterday, and below, how the area looked when parking for hundreds of cars was permitted

Bashed square back on parade fit for a king

By Alan Hamilton

THERE are no parked cars in Canaletto's depiction of Horse Guards Parade. Now, for the first time since 1916, the great national parade ground behind Whitehall has been returned to how it was when the artist saw it soon after Charles II built it as the mustering ground for his newly-raised Life Guards.

As part of a £1 million improvement scheme, the parade ground has been cleared of clutter and visually reunited with St James's Park: the black Tarmac road that separates them has been covered in golden gravel to create one continuous vista, as the King intended.

But more importantly, up

to 150 government ministers, civil servants and political journalists working unsocial hours who had permits to park on the parade have been banished to the north side of The Mall, and no parking of any kind will be allowed to spoil the view from Horse Guards Arch. All that remains of modern clutter is a Royal Parks police box.

The parade ground is bounded on one side by the Old Admiralty, which houses some Foreign and Commonwealth Office departments, and on the other by the high garden wall of 10 and 11 Downing Street. Officials would not discuss security yesterday, but the Depart-

ment of National Heritage said: "You may be assured that the area will be policed."

Clearing Horse Guards has the backing of World Squares For All, a consultation group headed by Sir Norman Foster, the architect, which is looking at ways to improve squares in Westminster, including pedestrianising Trafalgar Square in front of the National Gallery, and part of Parliament Square. However, the group concedes that diverting the large volume of traffic could be a headache in both cases.

Virginia Bottomley, the National Heritage Secretary, said yesterday that 26 million tourists visited the United



Kingdom in 1996: "Our great heritage attractions are one of the main reasons why people come here. Now Horse Guards Parade can take its proper place as a heritage showpiece."

Opening up the parade is in line with the recommendations of the Royal Parks review group, which also favours the pedestrianisation

of the Buckingham Palace frontage. Dame Jennifer Jenkins, the group's chairwoman, said yesterday: "We are pleased that another step has been taken to enable people to walk with greater safety and comfort in the parks and their surroundings."

Horse Guards is the national parade ground, used for the Trooping the Colour cere-

mony on the Queen's official birthday in June. Beating Retreat ceremonies during the summer, a daily changing of the guard, and the formal reception of heads of state. The first beneficiary of the improved surroundings was President Ezer Weizman of Israel, who was received by the Queen there at the start of his state visit last week.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Boil water warning is extended to more homes

More householders were told yesterday to boil their water after an infection caused by a microscopic parasite in tap water extended to new areas. Three Valleys Water, which has already alerted 300,000 people in Hertfordshire and north London to the problem, issued warnings to a further 25,000 people in parts of Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire.

Tanker pledge

Messer UK, a transport company that has been using the same vehicles to supply carbon dioxide to Scottish Nuclear and food and drink companies, has agreed to use separate tankers after fears of possible contamination in a radioactive leak last month.

Car dragged PC

PC Craig Key, 36, suffered cuts and bruising after being dragged for a mile behind a car at up to 60mph in Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham. He was attacked by five car thieves when his alsatian bit one of them. Four youths were later arrested.

School bus injury

A girl on her way home on a school bus fell through a window and was left dangling by her ankle. Stephanie Murphy, 14, of Ashton-under-Lyme, Tameside, broke her ankle and injured her back, shoulder and rib. The bus firm's contract was suspended.

Glimmer of hope

Plans for a bypass that would have destroyed a significant colony of the rare glow-worm have been postponed. Gloucestershire County Council is to suspend a decision on the Tewkesbury bypass until an 18-month study of options has been completed.

Lewis in London

The American comic Jerry Lewis is to make his West End debut at the age of 70. He will play the lead in *Damn Yankees*, which opens at the Adelphi Theatre in June. He has already appeared in the musical on Broadway and on an American tour.

Bittersweet remedy is equal of drugs for sore throat

By Jeremy Laurance
HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

HOT drinks of honey and lemon, or a similar remedy, will ease a sore throat as quickly as a course of antibiotics, a study has found. Prescribing antibiotics makes no difference to the speed with which patients recover and should be avoided by doctors in all but severe illnesses, according to researchers at the University of Southampton.

A trial of 716 patients compared three groups: those given a ten-day

prescription for antibiotics; those given a prescription to start after three days; and those given no prescription. All got better equally quickly.

By day three, about a third of the patients in each group were better; two thirds of those whose prescription was due to start then did not bother using it. There was no significant difference in the length of illness or days off work or school among the groups.

However, those patients who received antibiotics immediately were

more convinced about their effectiveness and were more likely to say they would consult the doctor again for a sore throat in the future. In fact, evidence shows that antibiotics increase the recurrence of infection by altering the bacteria in the throat and limiting the development of natural immunity.

Dr Paul Little and colleagues say in the *British Medical Journal* that giving an immediate prescription encourages the medicalisation of a self-limiting illness (one that will get better without treatment) without

affecting its course. Many patients go to their GP to legitimise their illness, either for work or family and friends.

The study also found that patients who were more satisfied recovered more quickly and that satisfaction related to how well the doctor dealt with the patients' concerns.

Dr Little said: "I am afraid it is true that for people who are moderately ill with sore throats it doesn't make any difference what they take. The message for doctors is that it is well worth exploring the patients' concerns because that is likely to improve

satisfaction, and the more satisfied patients are, the quicker they get better."

Antibiotics are ineffective in treating acute sinusitis according to a study of 214 patients reported in *The Lancet*. Researchers at St Elizabeth Hospital in Tilburg, The Netherlands, compared two groups of patients whose inflamed sinuses had been confirmed by X-ray. One was given antibiotics and the other a placebo. There was no difference in the speed of recovery or the number of relapses one year after treatment.

Christian Dior

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551 من الالهة

'The Victorians went to stare at the animals. That is no longer enough today'

Substandard zoos face closure under Labour

By NICK NUTTALL, ENVIRONMENT CORRESPONDENT

A NUMBER of zoos face closure under a Labour government, it was disclosed yesterday. Elliot Morley, the Opposition spokesman on animal welfare, said regulations would be introduced to drive up standards at zoos and wildlife parks.

The stricter controls have the backing of the Federation of Zoological Gardens of Great Britain and Ireland, whose members include London, Chester, Bristol and Edinburgh zoos. In addition, the import of some species, such as polar bears, which research indicates suffer psychologically in captivity, may be banned. "I do not think zoos will be keeping some species when the last ones in captivity die," Mr Morley said.

The Labour spokesman told a meeting at London Zoo that instead of being merely money raising ventures, zoos of all sizes would have to meet modern standards on welfare, education, science and conservation. "Zoos were set up in Victorian times to exhibit animals as novelties where people came to stare. That was enough then but is no longer enough today."

Mr Morley said that some smaller zoos, together with

those at theme parks, had not made the transition from side show to the sophistication demanded by the public, which would also be required by Labour. A Labour government would set up a Captive Animal Welfare Council, mirroring the existing Farm Animal Welfare Council, which maintains standards in agriculture, to draft minimum standards and to enforce them, he said.

There would also be an independent assessment of the Zoo Licensing Act, which covers anyone wishing to show animals to the public. The Act mainly concerns health and safety issues, rather than the wider issues of welfare, research, education and conservation. "The Act is fairly limited," Mr Morley said. "It is also applied by local authorities with disparate standards. A zoo council, with a director-general, will lay down uniform standards nationally and each zoo will have a mission statement."

He conceded that some zoos with shoddy standards, insufficient vision, or funds to raise standards, would be under threat. "It is likely some will have to close," Mr Morley, a former council member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, said. "The Labour government would consider setting up a closure fund for relocating animals at zoos that were closed."

He also pledged Labour support for an EU-led Zoo Directive, which is backed by the federation and by anti-zoo groups such as Zoo Check and the Born Free Foundation, co-founded by the actress Virginia McKenna. The directive would set minimum standards across the EU.

Mr Morley said he had visited, officially and incognito, a dozen zoos in Britain before formulating Labour's strategy and had been both gratified and appalled by the varying standards he had seen. He contrasted the poorer establishments with a small zoo at Alfriston, East Sussex, called Drusillas. "It is a small zoo, with a small number of animals and with not a great deal of money. But it is doing great and very positive work with children."

Ms McKenna said: "We welcome the important steps



Children can see the meerkats at close quarters through a transparent dome in their enclosure at Drusillas, where they learn through play

COLLECTIONS

THERE are around 300 zoos in Britain, ranging from the flagship establishments such as London to small collections of owls, birds of prey or even butterflies. Any collection of wild, as opposed to domestic animals, that is shown to the public for more than seven days a year is considered a zoo, as are aquaria such as sea life centres. Some 60 zoos are members of the Federation of Zoological Gardens of Great Britain and Ireland and abide by its guidelines. The federation was set up in 1966 by several zoological societies amid concern that the growing animal welfare movement might damage their future by securing unbalanced, anti-zoo legislation. It set standards of welfare and inspected members to ensure they were maintained.

It's cool to be a meerkat in Drusillas' model world

By NICK NUTTALL

DRUSILLAS zoo nestles in a fold of the South Downs near Alfriston, East Sussex, and is, according to Labour, a model for small zoos in the late 20th century.

The zoo keeps only animals that appear to thrive in captivity and their enclosures are designed to be as close to an animal's natural habitat as is practically possible. Kitty Ann, one of the zoo's directors, said that their meerkats lived in sand, deep enough to burrow, among scrub trees mirroring the animals' native habitat in South Africa.

The philosophy of the zoo is that young visitors not only see the animals but learn to understand where they live and how they survive. Child-

ren gain knowledge through play and entertaining practical exercises.

Next to the meerkats' enclosure is another sandpit into which the children can, like the animals, burrow as if being chased by a predatory eagle. The children, aged up to 12, emerge at the centre of a clear dome, from which they can see the real animals around them. Near the African wild cats is a pole. "We tell the children that it can jump six feet to catch a bird. So how high can they jump?" Ms Ann said.

The zoo, which has a children's board of directors, also uses its animals to teach young people about the environment. Near the penguins'

enclosure, young visitors are dressed in flippers, snorkels, and fake fur coats, and are then handed a fishing line.

Drusillas has 200,000 visitors a year. Ms Ann said the most popular activity was linked to the beaver collection and involved pulling a rope with levers and weights through a hole. "They can see how much pulling power a beaver has when it is handling a log, or a fox when it is attacking a rabbit."

The zoo is planning an exhibition about North American Indians this year. Children will not only learn about Indian culture but how different animals, such as the buffalo, the beaver and the salmon, shaped tribal lives.



Morley and eagle owl at London Zoo: seeking raising of standards

Leading article, page 21



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Howard cleared of bribe slur

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY

MICHAEL HOWARD, the Home Secretary, was cleared yesterday of accepting a £15 million bribe to open an inquiry into Mohamed Al Fayed's takeover of House of Fraser.

A four-month Commons investigation rejected the allegation, which was made by Mr Al Fayed, chairman of Harrods, in his long-running feud with Tiny Rowland, former chief executive of Lorrho. Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, interviewed 27 witnesses and examined 1,600 pages of evidence, including details of Mr Howard's bank accounts to discover whether the minister had accepted an bribe to open an inquiry into the takeover of House of Fraser.

Mr Al Fayed, an Egyptian-born businessman, has fought an expensive campaign to try to prove that Mr Howard is behind repeated refusals to grant him British citizenship.

Cook tells Europe: I'm here to prepare for government

FROM CHARLES BREMMER IN BRUSSELS AND JILL SHERMAN

LABOUR'S "government-in-waiting" is preparing to lift several British veto threats to a revamped Maastricht treaty and expects to agree a new text with other EU states before the Amsterdam summit in June, Robin Cook said yesterday.

Projecting himself as the next Foreign Secretary, Mr Cook said that Labour was ready for swift action to remove obstacles laid by Tory ministers at the intergovernmental conference (IGC), which is revising the treaty. But he said that Labour would insist on a measure allowing Britain to keep passport controls while the rest of the EU pursued an open-frontier policy.

Mr Cook, who was in Brussels for talks with Jacques Santer, President of the EU Commission, also said he was bewildered by suggestions that his prediction on Tuesday of a "Labour landslide" risked damaging the party's prospects. Tony Blair responded to the Shadow Foreign Secretary's remarks with a warning against complacency that was seen as a tacit rebuke.

The Labour leader said that Mr Cook, who was speaking at a party to mark the 60th anniversary of *Tribune*, was simply referring to the "sense of hope and excitement" in the party. Appearing on Granada

TV's *This Morning*, Mr Blair said: "If you take people for granted, they very quickly remind you who is boss. We take nothing for granted. This has been a patient rebuilding of the Labour Party as the new Labour Party. We take our responsibility very seriously."

But Mr Cook was unfazed by Mr Blair's remarks and denied that he was being prematurely triumphant. "I am here this afternoon preparing for government," he said. "I am left bewildered at the suggestion that because the Opposition is preparing for government it is therefore being too cocky. I think that the Opposition would be perfectly fairly criticised and condemned if it was failing to prepare for government."

Setting out Labour's agenda for a constructive approach to Europe, Mr Cook said that the Government had trapped itself into constantly heckling from the sidelines. "We want to get Britain playing a leading role."

He said it was curious that Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, and a Scotsman, had taken to preaching English nationalism in Europe. The Tories had "sprayed promises to veto the IGC around every difficult issue" and no-one in Europe took them seriously. Labour would lift the Government's threat to

block the IGC unless it won an exemption from the 48-hour week directive. Labour supported the law and would also sign up to the social chapter, bringing it inside the treaty. The chapter was kept as a protocol as a way of enabling Britain to opt out. Unlike the Tories, a Labour government would also back the insertion of an "employment chapter" in the new treaty, a scheme backed by most other member states.

Mr Cook implied that Labour would press outside the IGC for a solution to the dispute over "quota-hopping" by foreign fishing fleets. The Government says it will block the IGC unless the practice is ended.

He confirmed Labour's plan to allow laws to be passed by majority vote rather than unanimity in more areas, including policy over regional funds and agriculture. The Government is refusing to contemplate any dilution of the veto. Labour would, however, refuse to abandon the veto in key fields such as taxation, treaty reform and other areas of vital national interest. In return, Britain would expect a heavier voting weight in the European Council.

The party remained open-minded about plans for "flexibility", the jargon for a system that would allow Britain or



other states effectively to opt out of new common policies. Last month Mr Blair said he opposed any flexibility arrangement that could be used to sideline Britain.

Beyond the IGC, Mr Cook said he was preparing intensively for Britain's turn in the EU presidency in the first half of next year. The priorities would be bolstering the single market and opening the EU to the new democracies of central and eastern Europe and

Cyprus. "History will judge us very harshly indeed if we fail these countries."

The British presidency will see the selection of countries qualified to launch monetary union. Mr Cook said there was a 50-50 chance that EMU would go ahead on time in 1999, but he would not be drawn on the prospects of British membership under a Labour government.

Leading article, page 21

Labour to make the best of uneasy peace in Scotland

By GILLIAN BOWDITCH, SCOTLAND CORRESPONDENT

TONY BLAIR will address the Scottish Labour Party conference today after an eleventh-hour deal to settle a dispute that threatened to upset the election campaign.

The Labour leadership has called off an aggressive takeover of the Scottish Executive Committee by withdrawing the two candidates it was backing for the posts of chairman and treasurer. The nominations had met strong opposition.

An uneasy peace has now been established, which is being exploited by the conference organisers, who are stage-managing the Inverness event with minute precision. All the delegates, who began arriving yesterday, are expected to toe the party line.

The leadership's withdrawal of Sylvia Tudge, a nominee of the engineering union, as chairman, and Jim Stevens, an economist and outspoken sceptic on some aspects of devolution, as treasurer, is being seen as a big concession by the old Labour pro-devolution faction. It means that the two remaining candidates, Jackie Baillie, the present vice-chairman, and Bob Thompson, the treasurer, will be elected unopposed.

The two posts are particularly significant as the holders will have an important say in choosing Labour candidates for a Scottish parliament and will help to determine the leadership's attitude to a referendum on devolution. Mr

Thompson was particularly outspoken during Mr Blair's decision last June to hold a two-question referendum on Scotland. The Scottish executive finally backed the proposal for a referendum, including a separate vote on tax-raising powers, after a tense meeting with Mr Blair. But the manner of the deal provoked anger and in-fighting. The most recent attempt to stage a Blairite takeover of the executive was the last straw and many felt that a climbdown was inevitable.

The ructions are unlikely to spread to the conference floor today or tomorrow. Scottish Labour officials are now expert in spin-doctoring and controlling unruly delegates. They sport sharp suits and mobile phones and are far removed from the trade union-backed officials who ran the party in the past.

In an effort to ensure that nothing detracts from the leader's speech, no other Shadow Cabinet member will speak today and debates will be limited to about ten minutes each. On Saturday, Robin Cook and Gordon Brown will address the conference.

Even so, Mr Blair will be acutely aware that his personal stock remains low in Scotland, where a poll last year showed that to many voters he appears false and untrustworthy. This week, System Three poll for *The Herald* showed Labour down six points at 46 per cent.

Parties' report heralds progressive alliance

RIDDELL ON POLITICS

THE foundations for a sweeping programme of constitutional reform have now been put in place. Their ambitious scope is underlined by this week's report of the joint Labour and Liberal Democrat consultative committee. The proposals cover much more than the distant possibility of electoral reform, or even devolution, which have so far attracted most attention.

The 18-page report sets out an agreed programme on incorporation of the European Convention of Human Rights (along the lines of Lord Lester's current Bill in the Lords), a freedom of information Act (though with important exclusions on policy advice to ministers), an independent national statistical service, directly elected legislatures in Scotland and Wales, an elected strategic authority in London and a stage-by-stage approach to devolution in the English regions, a commission on a voting system for Westminster to be appointed early in the next Parliament and to report within 12 months, a proportional system of voting based on regional lists for the European Parliament, far-reaching changes in the procedures of the Commons, ending the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the Lords (as the first stage of a "process of reform") and legislation to give legal force to the civil service code of conduct. Phew! There is enough here to keep Parliament fully occupied for several sessions.

Any questions are begged or evaded. Apart from devolution, there is no indication of priorities or timing. On some issues, a new government would set up further inquiries, notably the commission to recommend an appropriate proportional alternative to the first-past-the-post system to be put in a later referendum (at an indefinite future date). There is a suspicion that this is partly a way of delaying tricky decisions for the Labour leadership, but the Liberal Democrats are pleased that the commission's remit is specifically to find a proportional alternative (no doubt reflecting Robin Cook's views) — though I still believe that the only change acceptable to Labour would be the single constituency alternative vote.

The proposed special committee on modernising the House of Commons (involving the Leader and Shadow Leader of the Commons) and joint committee of both Houses on a long-term plan for a "democratic and representative second chamber" are both intended to establish as wide support as possible for change before detailed proposals are put forward. In the Commons, this would cover ways of improving the scrutiny of legislation and of European proposals, enhance

be crucial in the parliamentary debates on the Bills.

The report does, however, bind the Liberal Democrats in to the Labour constitutional programme. For instance, while the Liberal Democrats disagree with Labour's proposals for pre-legislative referendums, and in particular with the second question in Scotland about tax-raising powers, they would not seek to frustrate or delay the referendum legislation and both parties "would campaign strongly for a positive outcome". This is likely to be the extent of co-operation in the early stages of a Parliament. Talk of a merger or formal deals is not on the agenda: both parties are too wary of each other. But this week's report is an important stage in creating a new progressive alliance.

PETER RIDDELL

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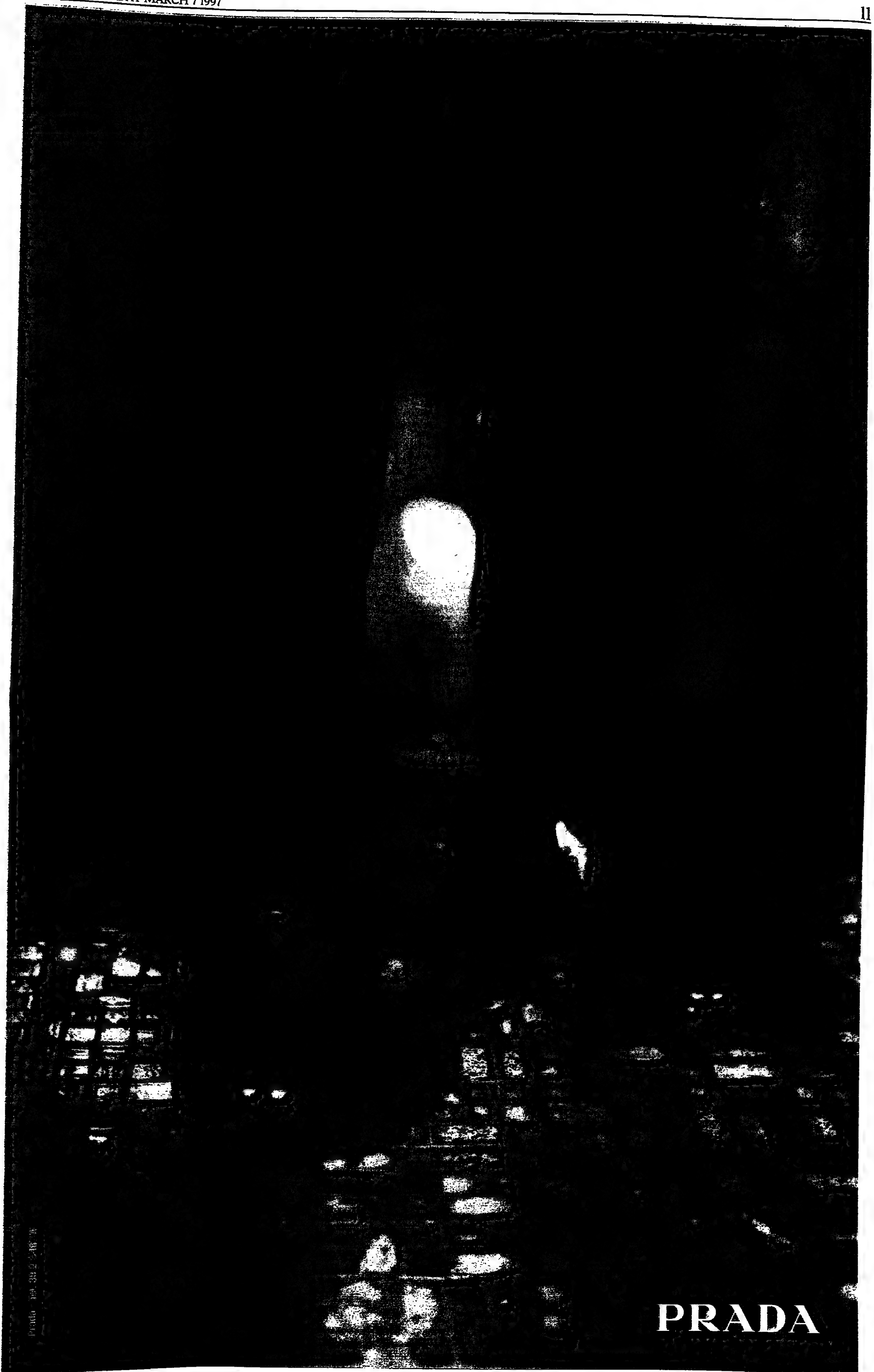
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Promises leave Moscow cold

FROM ROBIN LODGE
IN MOSCOW

ANDREI GUSEV, 58, a Moscow caretaker, has heard many speeches in his time from many leaders and yesterday's performance by President Yeltsin did little to impress him.

"Nothing new" was his verdict. "They all make the same promises, but in the end the ordinary people like me just keep on getting screwed."

Mr Gusev's views were echoed by many others yesterday in Moscow. "He told us last year that pensioners would get their money. He promised to deal with crime, but nothing has changed," said Valentina Davydova, a retired schoolteacher. "Of course, he has been sick, but something should have been done."

"He spoke well," said Vladimir Pilyugin, a businessman. "But we will have to see if there are any results."

Few had taken the trouble to watch the state of the nation address, broadcast live on state television. "What did I need to watch for?" asked Olga Gorbunova, 22. "I know what he said: everything is fine, all problems will be solved, we are building democracy. Maybe I will watch on the news tonight, but then maybe not."

Those that did see the speech agreed that Mr Yeltsin looked fit and appeared to have recovered all his old vigour. Even the phlegmatic Mr Gusev agreed that he had been impressed by the President's recovery. "We are a tough people, but I must say I was surprised. When he went to hospital last time, I thought that's it. But just look at him."

By all accounts, the President is taking his doctors' advice seriously, although some of them have described him as "a difficult patient", and his decision to make a slow return to public life appears to have paid off.

Yeltsin vows fresh drive to root out corruption

FROM RICHARD BEESTON IN MOSCOW

PRESIDENT Yeltsin served notice yesterday that he was back in control of Russia when he delivered a forceful address pledging to shake up his Cabinet, push through economic reforms and crack down on corruption.

After eight months plagued by illness, the Russian leader appeared finally to have regained his health, when he delivered a 25-minute speech in commanding style to a joint session of parliament.

In a brutally honest assessment of the state of the nation, the Kremlin leader described a country where officials were corrupt, workers were unpaid, the military was crumbling and relations with the West were reaching a crisis point.

"Having built a new political system, we have stuck mid-way," he said in the annual address, broadcast live nationwide. "We have left the old shore but we are floundering in a stream of problems. The stream is carrying us away from the new shore."

He said one of his first moves to rectify the situation would be to reshuffle the Government and bring in "competent, vigorous people". It is probable that Anatoli Chubais, the presidential Chief of Staff, will

be promoted to a new post in charge of the economy and that Yegor Gaidar, the liberal former Prime Minister, may make a comeback.

"One of the main faults of the Russian authorities at all levels is corruption," the President said. "It provides the spawning ground for most economic crimes. We should not have any untouchable individuals. If the tracks of a crime lead to high office, you must act resolutely and strictly in accordance with law."

He also drew attention to unpaid wages and pensions, issues which he vowed to tackle during last year's presidential election campaign. Similarly, he promised "fundamental decisions" to push through urgently needed reforms in the armed forces, which have been left to collapse in spite of repeated promises to turn the military into a professional force.

One of the most urgent issues on President Yeltsin's agenda is Nato's planned expansion eastwards. Yesterday the Kremlin leader reiterated his opposition to the move and warned the West of the dangers of isolating Russia.

For most Russians, the importance of the speech was more in its delivery than in its contents. Most of the problems raised by President Yeltsin have been left unresolved.

Of more immediate interest was the fact that the Russian leader finally appeared ready to resume his duties, which were effectively suspended after an illness last July, followed by an open heart bypass operation in November and finally an attack of pneumonia in January.

"I saw a tough Yeltsin, exactly the man we adored in 1987," said Yuri Luzhkov, the Mayor of Moscow and a Yeltsin loyalist. Gennadi Zyuganov, the Communist Party leader, described the address as "miserable, helpless buffoonery without any real content".

As far as the workers are concerned, the Government — though calling itself Social Democrat — has inherited the



Lech Walesa breaks bread with fellow strikers at the Gdansk shipyard when the Solidarity union was born in the Eighties. The movement shook communism and marked a European turning point

Polish crisis looms as shipyard cradle of Solidarity is closed

BY ROGER BOYES

THE axe fell yesterday on the Gdansk shipyard, birthplace of Poland's Solidarity revolution and site of one of Europe's great historic turning points.

Workers — most of them young men who were infants when the 1980s strike at the yard fatally weakened communism in the Soviet bloc — were told that all efforts to save the financially sick enterprise had failed.

"I have to dismiss everyone," said Wieslaw Szal, the official receiver. "From today we are beginning the process of sacking 3,800 workers." The closure of the yard is set to provoke a political crisis. The decision to declare bankruptcy last summer, and to close down the yard now, was taken by the post-Communist Government.

As far as the workers are concerned, the Government — though calling itself Social Democrat — has inherited the

prejudices and principles of its Soviet bloc forefathers. "Communist pigs — hands off the yard" reads the banner strung across the main entrance.

Solidarity, which has remodelled itself from an orthodox trade union into the most potent force in the Centre-

to lead the 1980s strikes — and after he was defeated in his attempt to win a second term as Polish President, he promised to return to his job as an electrician. He did return, though only for a few minutes: long enough for a photo opportunity to embarrass the Government into awarding

Walesa returned for a few minutes; to embarrass the Government into awarding him a pension?

Right of Polish politics, will take up the cause of the yard, and unless there is a last-minute rescue it is likely to radicalise the political climate ahead of general elections in the autumn.

The most famous worker in the yard was Lech Walesa — who clambered over the fence

him a presidential pension. It is not clear what role he will play in fighting for the yard. Certainly, there is no great love of him in the workforce. Many believe that he has deserted his former shipyard colleagues.

The Government, which has a 60 per cent stake, says

the yard has been bleeding subsidies. It also argued that declaring the yard bankrupt last summer was not an attempt at closure, but a way of making it a more attractive purchase for any foreign investors.

A German shipowner ordered five ships, but the Polish PKO bank refused to grant a \$100 million (£62 million) loan to carry out these and other contracts. The yard's debts now exceed \$136 million and further credit has been refused.

Scout Lech Walesa will lecture as an honorary professor on labour relations at Korea University twice a year from May, school officials said. South Korea was rocked by three weeks of nationwide strikes in December and January, triggered by a new labour law that made mass layoffs easier. More stoppages are threatened. (AP)

Uproar as body of forgotten girl found

FROM CHARLES BRENNER
IN BRUSSELS

BELGIANS vented their anger against judicial authorities yesterday after the belated discovery of the body of a nine-year-old girl by police investigating child murders.

The remains of Loubna Bensaïda were found in a steel trunk buried among car parts at a filling station in the Brussels district of Ixelles, yards from the supermarket where she disappeared in 1992. Patrick Derocquette, 33, the garage owner's son and a convicted child molester, had confessed to her murder and was in custody, officials said.

Hundreds of people laid white flowers and candles at the site as the media and politicians gave vent to their outrage over the authorities' failure to take proper action when the girl vanished. "Once again, we are confronted with lamentable judicial behaviour," *Le Soir* said.

Loubna became a household name in the aftermath of the August arrest of Marc Dutroux, the paedophile being held on suspicion of murdering four girls and kidnapping at least two others. The discovery of her remains was announced by Jean-Luc Dehaene, the Prime Minister, whose Government has been rocked by disclosures of police bungling.

A new child-murder team reopened the Loubna investigation last autumn and found her remains after a tip-off.



Loubna: remains found buried at garage

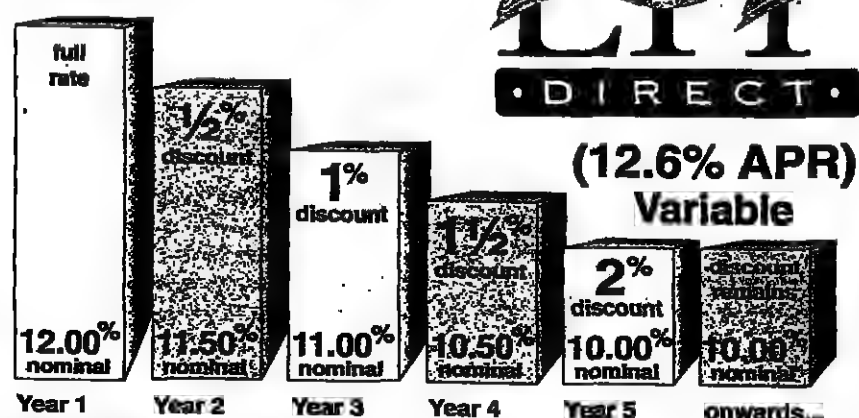
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President hosts round-table talks with Opposition to find solution for Albanian crisis

Tirana grants truce to let rebels hand over looted arms

FROM TOM WALKER IN TIRANA

THE Albanian Government said yesterday that army operations in the South would be suspended from this morning, and declared a two-day amnesty to enable citizens and rebels to hand back weapons stolen from armories in the past week.

Whether the measure would have a calming effect on the state of anarchy was unclear. The announcement came after five hours of talks between the Opposition and Sali Berisha, but the Albanian President gave little sign that he would offer any political concessions.

Mr Berisha did not sign the joint statement and its validity remained in doubt. Nevertheless, it did have the apparent support of Tiran Shetu, the Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister.

The round-table meeting, held at the Presidency, was the first real political dialogue since a state of emergency was declared on Sunday. But Albania remains a deeply divided country, with police and Shik secret agents holding the population of the North in fear, and rebels, sometimes supported by defecting army units, consolidating their control over swathes of the South.

President Berisha refused to comment on opposition demands that a temporary "technical" government be formed, which would give opposition parties ministerial posts.

"It's difficult to sum up what he said exactly," slender Gjinushi, head of the Social Democratic Party, noted. "But in the end the only thing we were agreed upon was that the bloodshed must be stopped."

Paskal Milo, another Social Democrat, said "only seven minutes" of the meeting were devoted to formulating a political solution to the crisis. The talks are scheduled to be reconvened at the weekend; on the agenda will be the critical issue of voting in a new Prime Minister to replace Aleksander Meksi, who was dismissed last Saturday.

American military commanders in Germany are preparing plans to evacuate more than 1,600 Americans living in Albania, a US European command spokesman said yesterday (Our Foreign Staff writes). In Britain, the Foreign Office advised against visits to Albania for the time being and urged British citizens and their dependants now in Albania to leave if their presence was not essential.

In the lawless South yesterday, rebel groups in stolen tanks roamed through the streets, and the death toll rose as a result of accidental shootings and tragic pranks. A tank, stolen in Sarande lay in a ditch, a 13-year-old blew himself up and a 25-year-old man was shot while posing for international camera crews. At least 20 people have died in the past week. "It's Mad Max country down there," noted one diplomat.

State radio and independent witnesses reported that rebels had partly blown up a key road bridge between Sarande and Gjirokastra, cutting off

the army's one significant southern base from the rebel-held belt extending from Sarande and Delvine northwards to Vlore.

An American diplomat said there was little prospect of the army regaining control of the region, given its lack of firepower and poor discipline. Its conscripts are paid \$2 (£1.24) a month and have little incentive to risk their lives.

The Government also announced on state radio that warrants had been issued for the arrest of Edmond Zhupani, the main naval commander, and five other military officers. One of the officers wanted is stationed in Vlore. The announcement seemed to be more bluster than any real threat to the disaffected Albanian military. The Government also said it wanted Italy to extradite the two pilots who defected in an elderly MiG on Wednesday: the two have sought political asylum.

In the capital, Tirana, the reopening of political dialogue did little to restore faith in the Government. The German Embassy was said to have advised its citizens, including aid workers, to leave the country, and Swiss Air reported a rush of bookings.

Diplomats here agree that the coming days will be crucial if the Balkan state is to be rescued from the brink of a civil war. They are worried that factionalism within the Socialist Party, the main opposition bloc, could play into President Berisha's hands.

Opposition leaders said they were pinning their hopes on Western intervention. "We need Europe and the United States to support us," Neritan Ceka, head of the opposition Democratic Alliance, said.

He said the issue of a "technical government" could be raised by the Council of Europe at its meeting with President Berisha today. It is the first of several international delegations to be visiting Tirana in coming days.



David Smiley, left, photographed with Billy McLean in Albania during the Second World War, and at his west London home yesterday

British war hero backs 'honest' Berisha

BY MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

FEW people have a good word to say for Sali Berisha, the beleaguered Albanian President, but Colonel David Smiley, a friend of many years and a legendary figure in this troubled country, feels he must speak up for him.

"I feel very sad for him. I knew Albania when it was a feudal state, when there were no shops and no restaurants and the only cars belonged to Communist leaders. Now there are shops, restaurants and hotels, and there are too many cars on the road. Sali Berisha has achieved this."

Colonel Smiley, 81 next month, was one of the daring undercover British officers from the Special Operations Executive (SOE) who parachuted into Albania in 1943 to fight the Germans and Italians alongside the Communist partisans, and again in 1944, that time with the nationalists in the north when there was a civil war raging. He is one of the last survivors of Operation Consensus 1 and 2. Two of his SOE colleagues were Julian Amery, the late Tory peer, and Neil "Billy" McLean.

In 1949 he was seconded to M16 for two years to train and arm Albanian agents as part of a secret operation to liberate the country from the Communists and the Soviet

orbit. It failed disastrously, the undercover mission being betrayed to the Russians by Kim Philby.

Colonel Smiley's picture — with those of Amery and McLean — was put up on a wall inside the Pyramid building in Tirana under the label "war criminal". Yet he, as a military adviser to the partisans from April to November 1943, had played a key role in sabotaging the Italian occupying forces and the German Alpine division.

Not that Enver Hoxha, the partisan leader later to become Albania's Communist dictator, ever thanked him. He used to claim that the Russians had saved Albania.

"But that was rubbish, it was mainly SOE with some help from OSS [the US Office of Strategic Services, the precursor of the CIA]," Colonel Smiley said.

More than 50 of Colonel Smiley's wartime colleagues died on Albanian soil. It was President Berisha who helped him to find their graves, and a monument was set up.

Colonel Smiley whose book, *Albanian Assignment*, was seen as such an important record of the war that it was translated into Albanian, said: "Berisha is an honest man and I believe he has done his best for his country. When he became President I was angry with him because I thought he should put on trial

all the Communists responsible for torturing and murdering. But he told me he wanted reconciliation, not revenge.

"I feel very sad about what is happening. He has brought so many changes for the good and I think it is unfair that he should be blamed solely for the collapse of the life-savings scheme. But he must try to form a government of national reconciliation."

Colonel Smiley has albums filled with fading photographs from his wartime exploits. His codename was

"Grin" and the Albanians he fought alongside were "Pikes". He became legendary for his expertise in blowing up bridges. He points proudly to a wartime photograph of a demolished bridge, and to the replacement bridge in an album from one of his visits to Albania since Mr Berisha became President.

For years Colonel Smiley was not allowed to talk about his M16 assignment in 1949. He did not discover that Philby, then M16 liaison officer in Washington, had be-

trayed the secret mission until many years later.

It was because of his attachment to M16 and his SOE exploits that it was assumed it was his name that had been chosen by John le Carré for his character George Smiley, the hero of *Smiley's People*. However, Colonel Smiley said that the author had never heard of him, and "admitted that he had taken the name from the register of pupils at Eton. He was Master at Eton when my two sons were pupils".

Mothering Sundae

Reporter dressed as nun beats press ban

FROM TUNKU VARADARAJAN
IN MADRID

A SPANISH journalist has disguised herself as a nun to file reports from the southern Albanian town of Vlore, at present still in rebel control. Cristina López Schlichting, a special correspondent with the Madrid daily ABC, filed an extensive report from the embattled Adriatic port yesterday. The Albanian Government had banned foreign journalists from Vlore on Monday.

Señora López, 32, a mother of three, hit upon her idea when she met the mother superior of Vlore's Franciscan convent at a hotel in Tirana. The elderly nun was keen to return to her besieged community, but reluctant to travel south alone. Señora López offered to accompany her in exchange for the loan of a spare brown habit.

On their drive to Vlore, alarmed soldiers at checkpoints tried repeatedly to stop them. At the last government checkpoint, 30 miles from the rebel-held town, they were detained for several hours before being allowed to proceed. Señora López witnessed soldiers randomly pick out a man from a group of onlookers and thrash him severely. When she tried to intervene, playing the compassionate nun, she was warned to "shut up".

Eventually, they were allowed to proceed, having changed their car — which bore Tirana number plates — for one with plates from Vlore. "They will shoot you on sight with those Tirana plates," a soldier had said. According to Señora López, the soldiers made a pitiful sight — young, poorly armed and fed, and ill disciplined.

In Vlore, the Spanish reporter said hatred was expressed everywhere for President Berisha. Yet the mood, although sullen, was strangely conciliatory. Residents told her that solution could be reached. A housewife said: "There will be peace if people get their money back, especially the poorest ones who have lost everything."



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German unions urge brake on euro as unemployment rises

FROM ROGER BOYES IN BONN

THE powerful German trade union movement is abandoning its uncritical support for Europe's economic and monetary union (EMU) and will demand a delay in the single currency unless Bonn introduces major job-creation elements in the Maastricht follow-up treaty.

That warning, given yesterday by Dieter Schulte, a trade union chief, marks a fundamental shift in German politics. It came as Germany announced that it was still failing to bring down unemployment. February figures released yesterday showed a rise of 13,600 on January to 4,672,000 — a lower rise than predicted, but nonetheless the highest level of unemployment since the 1930s. The jobless rate was 12.2 per cent — among the worst in Europe. The jobs figure was 401,500 more than in February 1996, the Labour Office said.

The total out of work in western

Germany, the country's economic motor, decreased slightly — from 3,265,000 in January to 3,257,000. Unemployment in the former East Germany rose to 1,414,000 — up 21,800 on January.

"The government coalition should not believe that it can buy its entry ticket to Maastricht at the cost of ordinary people," said Herr Schulte, chairman of the German Trade Union Federation. "I am speaking for the majority of voters who will be deciding on the Government's future in 1998." Until now the unions' line has been that monetary union offered more opportunities than risks. "But the trade union federation can no longer accept that the Maastricht criteria for 1999 are fulfilled by fiscal and social measures which operate exclusively at the cost of employees." The support of the unions for the current EMU schedule would depend on "binding commitments" on employment and

social issues to be written in to the revised Maastricht treaty.

Economic figures released this week do not suggest that Germany is heading for the kind of miraculous recovery that would turn around the job market. The federal statistics office indicated that the German economy expanded by 0.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of last year, and the first quarter of this year will also record very sluggish growth, say economists. The only sign of recovering confidence is in export orders, pushed along by the relative weakness of the mark against the dollar. Domestic consumption is still weak and the building sector is in deep trouble.

High unemployment, by pushing Germany further away from the Maastricht targets, inevitably prompts talk of delaying EMU. But it also weakens Germany's bargaining position as it seeks to bar other states from joining the currency union's first wave.



Men wait in line outside an employment office in Berlin. Unemployment rose last month to the highest figure since the 1930s



Tiberi: accused

Chirac ally faces sleaze inquiry

Paris Jean Tiberi, Mayor of Paris and ally of President Chirac, has been placed under formal legal investigation alongside his wife on suspicion of misusing public funds (Ben Macintyre writes).

M Tiberi, the most senior Gaullist to face a corruption inquiry since M Chirac came to power, said he was innocent and would not resign.

The sleaze investigation is a blow to the ruling Gaullist RPR party, which is reeling from accusations that its coffers were lined with bribes paid in exchange for city building contracts when M Chirac was Mayor and M Tiberi was his deputy in charge of the housing office.

The case against the Tiberis revolves around a brief written in 1994 for a regional council by Xavier Tiberi for which she was allegedly paid Fr200,000 (£25,000).

Protest at border screening

FROM TUNKU VARADARAJAN IN MADRID

BRITAIN protested to the Spanish authorities last night over their harassment of a group of Gibraltar schoolchildren who were denied entry to Spain.

The schoolchildren, aged between nine and 12, were delayed for several hours by Spanish border police, who refused to let them cross into Spain on the ground that their collective passport issued in Gibraltar was "an invalid travel document".

The British Embassy in Madrid said in a statement: "The use of children to pursue political aims is not an acceptable way of conducting business between fellow members of the European Union."

The rough treatment, which happened on Sunday, comes barely a month after Abel Matutes, the Spanish Foreign Minister, promised Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, that Spain would "respect the validity of all travel documents issued in Gibraltar". This latest incident at the border appears to be a breach of that undertaking.

A Gibraltar government official deplored the "ill-treatment of our little children". He said: "We allow Spanish schoolchildren into Gibraltar on collective passports. Only a week ago, 90 of them visited the Rock on a single Spanish collective passport."

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Hutu militia flees as Zairean town hails rebel victory

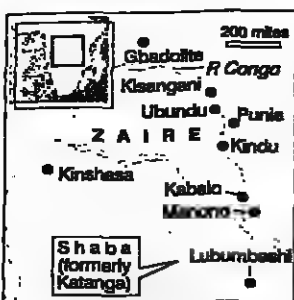
FROM SAM KILEY IN PUNIA

STARVING Hutu children, their skin hanging from their backsides like baggy pyjamas, tottered into a stinking barn for a last bowl of porridge before hitting the road on the orders of extremist leaders prepared to march them literally into the ground.

Since east Zaire's rebels overran their refugee camps in South Kivu province, hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Hutu civilians have been wandering in the vast tropical wilderness for four months. They have been herded as human shields by their own army and militia for more than 500 miles.

"We don't know where we are going, nor why any more. Many have died in the forests of disease and hunger," Jean Kanyamukenge, a former agronomy student from southern Rwanda, said.

The 4,027 tired and hungry refugees in the group moved as if in slow motion as they prepared yesterday to leave Punia, about halfway between Kindu and Kisangani in the north. The Hutu militia leaders had ordered them to march on as the rebel force approached the town. From the air thousands of others could be seen heading north in a miserable line along a dirt road towards Kisangani. Zairean officials said they would be stopped from enter-



ing the city and settled by the riverside town of Ubundu.

The rebel group, the Alliance of Forces for Liberation Congo-Zaire led by Laurent Kabila, has seized most of Zaire east of the River Congo. Punia, on their route to Kisangani, will fall without a fight.

The local population is pleased that the Hutu militia, responsible for the genocide of Tutsis in Rwanda, is leaving. They had complained incessantly about the presence of the militia whom they fear more than the rebels or government soldiers, who have a reputation for looting.

"Get lost," yelled Barthelmy, a teacher in the town, at the only uniformed gendarme left in Punia. "Of course I'm looking forward to the rebels getting here," he said. He suddenly swung around and snapped at a Hutu listening in: "And you can bugger off as well, you spy."

Mr Barthelmy said: "They are nothing but trouble, the Hutu soldiers. We have no problems with the civilians, they need our help. But the soldiers harass us, steal our cows. When the rebels get here, we will welcome them."

Most Zaireans here support the rebel force. As a result the rebels have been able to march unimpeded across the country and into towns.

Their next major rebel target is Kisangani. Judging by the numbers of desperate soldiers trying to get their families onto some of the last commercial flights out of the city, it may not be long before this objective is achieved.

Jan Pronk, the Dutch Development Minister, who visited Kisangani and Punia yesterday, was shaken by the state of the refugees and enraged that they were still being used as human shields. "There must be a ceasefire," Mr Pronk said. "Much more walking and all the refugees will be dead."

□ Nairobi: Kenya is to host a summit on the Zairean conflict on March 19 but Mr Kabila will not be invited, the Foreign Ministry said yesterday. Zaire's ailing President Mobutu has been asked to attend the one-day talks with President Mandela of South Africa and five other African heads of state. (Reuters)



Peter Berry begins his journey back to Blighty yesterday. He was one of 53 retiring civil servants and their families who took advantage of an old Empire perk to return by sea at the end of an assignment overseas.

First wave of expats embarks for home

FROM AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE IN HONG KONG

A GROUP of expatriate civil servants and their families set sail for Britain yesterday aboard a luxury cruise ship, leaving Hong Kong before the colony's handover to China in July.

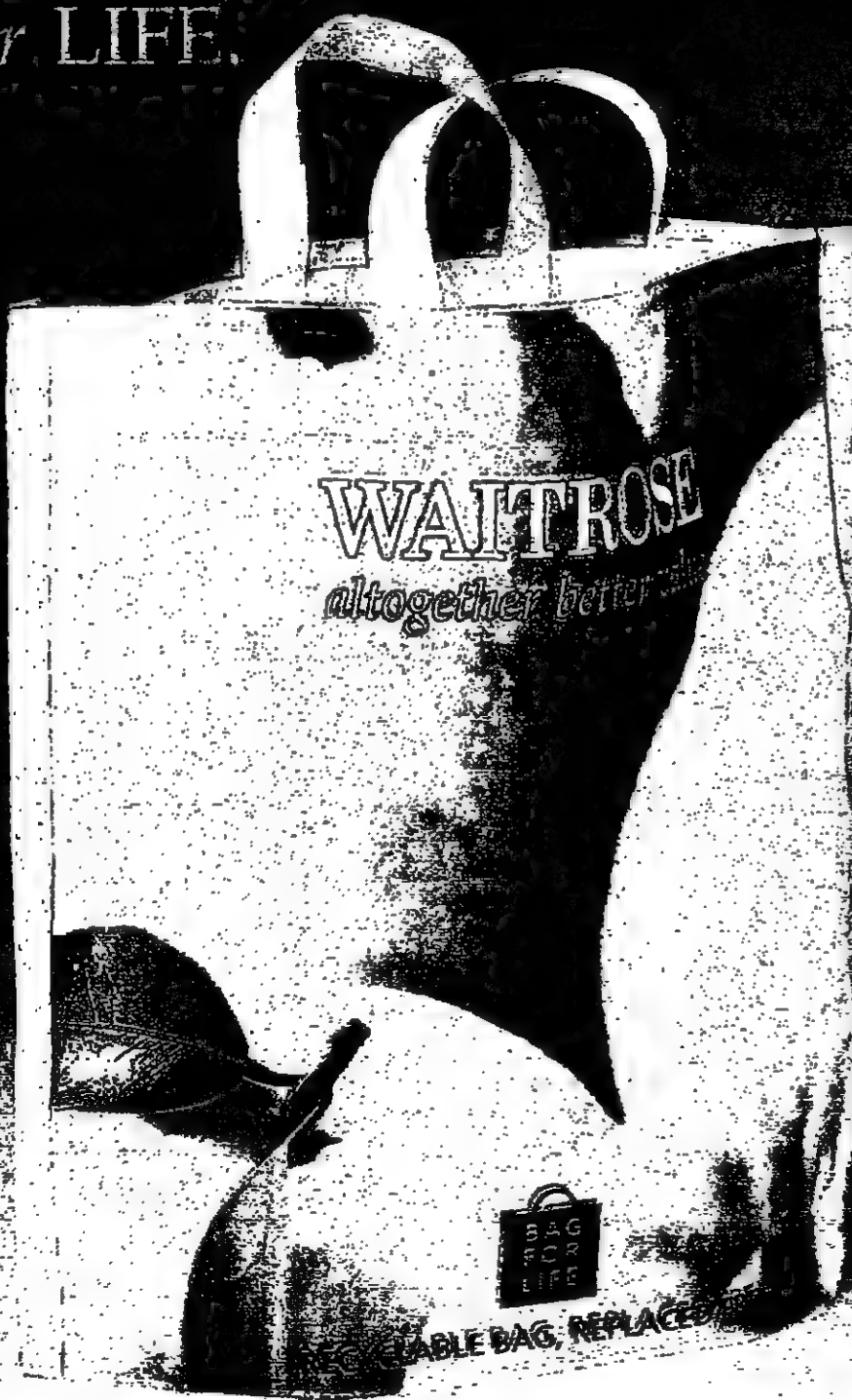
The group of 53 boarded the *Oriana*, enjoying a perk from Empire days under which members of Her Majesty's Overseas Civil Service could return to Britain by sea when their assignment ended. In a scene to delight the television documentary-makers who fill Hong Kong these days, the 69,000-tonne white giant was nudged by tugs into the centre of the harbour, gleaming in the sun's dying rays and framed by the territory's famous skyline.

Berthed alongside the *Oriana* was the Cunard flagship, the *QE2*, which will pick up a second group of more than 100 retiring civil servants and their families tomorrow.

To some of those heading home, they were returning to a country that after many years seemed almost an alien place with a chilly climate and violent crime. "I've been here for 31 years, and had a fabulous time," said Len Sayer. "My kids were born here, for them Hong Kong is their home."

Hong Kong has earmarked almost £1 million to send British civil servants back to Blighty this year.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

213 die in Tamil Tiger onslaught

Colombo: Military officials reported yesterday that 213 people were killed as Tamil Tiger guerrillas overran a military base and an airfield in eastern Sri Lanka (Our Foreign Staff write). At least 160 guerrillas and 49 soldiers died and an air force plane was destroyed.

The simultaneous attacks were the heaviest since January 9, when 223 soldiers and 380 guerrillas were killed. Britain is to provide £4 million for relief efforts for up to 200,000 people affected by the civil war.

Bhutto delay

Karachi: A Pakistani court ordered the arrest of Abdullah Shah, a former Sind province Chief Minister, and two police officials as it postponed the trial of Benazir Bhutto's husband. (AFP)

Software arrests

Los Angeles: US authorities say they have cracked a software counterfeiting ring, arresting Chinese nationals and seizing more than £3.7 million in pirated Microsoft programs and \$3 million cash. (AP)

Guyana mourns

Georgetown: President Jagan of Guyana died of heart problems in hospital in Washington, aged 78. The Prime Minister, Samuel Hinds, was sworn in as his successor. (AP) Obituary, page 23

Nepal defeat

Kathmandu: King Birendra accepted the resignation of the Nepali Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, after his centre-right coalition lost a parliamentary vote of confidence. (Reuters)

Paris hotel sale

Paris: The Sultan of Brunei's family said it had bought the Plaza Athénée luxury hotel in Paris. The British Granada group announced the sale on Monday, at an asking price of £45 million. (Reuters)

Abductor's death

Beijing: Han Fudong, 80, who as a young soldier helped to abduct Chiang Kai-shek, the Nationalist Chinese leader, to force an alliance with the Communist Party to fight the Japanese, has died. (AP)



Egypt set to tighten its controls on militant preachers

BY CHRISTOPHER WALKER, MIDDLE EAST CORRESPONDENT

EGYPT promised yesterday to intensify its crackdown on maverick Islamic clerics and to complete plans to control the country's 55,000 mosques and all Muslim preachers within five years.

The pledge, by Mahmoud Hamdi Zakouk, the Religious Endowments Minister, was a tightening of the screw on the militant Gamaa al-Islamiya (Islamic group) which took up arms against President Mubarak's moderate Islamic regime in 1992, threatening to turn Egypt into a second Iran. More than 1,000 people have been killed in political violence, but the casualty rate has fallen sharply in the past year and the Gamaa has mostly been driven out of Cairo to parts of Upper Egypt.

With the Government planning to take over all the remaining 30,000 private mosques at the rate of 6,000 a year, Mr Zakouk said that those responsible for running them had begun applying for licences for preachers under a law passed earlier this year.

The beefed-up attempt to impose Muslim orthodoxy comes after last month's potentially explosive massacre of ten Coptic Christians by Islamic militants in a church in Minya province and allegations by Hassan al-Alfi, the Interior Minister, that Iran is

supporting the Gamaa. The Minya massacre, the first sectarian attack of its kind against Egypt's 10 per cent Coptic minority to be made inside a church, was an attempt by Islamic extremists to destabilise the country by fomenting sectarian strife. The last attack of a similar scale was in March 1994 when gunmen shot dead five Christians.

Mr Zakouk said: "Perhaps one reason which moved us to bring the mosques under ministry control was to put an end to all forms of extremism which use mosques as a base." He made clear that there would be no place there for preachers who uphold unorthodox doctrines or engage in political activity hostile to the Government, although people were free to believe Shia Muslim doctrines.

Diplomats said the clampdown was recognition that despite the recent improvement in the security situation, Egypt is still riddled with social ills that could be exploited by fundamentalists. □ Jerusalem: Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's Prime Minister, called a Cabinet meeting last night to decide the extent of the first of three further military withdrawals from the occupied West Bank, which is due to be completed this weekend.

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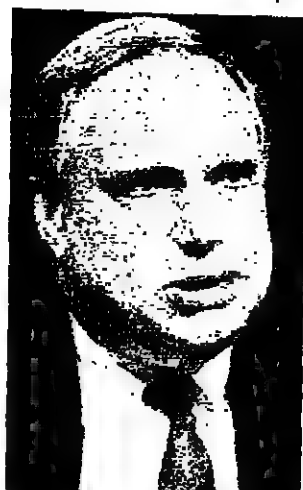
China developers gave Clinton aide cash for campaign

FROM BRONWEN MADDOX IN WASHINGTON

A FORMER senior aide to President Clinton was paid more than \$400,000 (£248,000) in total by a dozen companies, including the backers of a \$2 billion American-Chinese property development in China which received the endorsement of the Clinton Administration.

Webster Hubbell, one of Mr Clinton's closest friends who was forced to resign in 1994 as Associate Attorney-General to face criminal charges stemming from the Whitewater inquiry, accepted payments from companies controlled by the Riady family of Indonesia at about the same time as the Administration gave its backing to the development in China's Fujian province, *The New York Times* said.

Details of the payments have emerged during a whirlwind of charges that the White House broke federal rules on raising election funds and, even more seriously, that it allowed foreign companies and governments to influence the Administration's policy in return for cash contributions. Donations and payments by Chinese companies have come under particular scrutiny, against a background of tension in United States-China relations.



Hubbell took money from Indonesians

It also emerged yesterday that one of Hillary Clinton's aides accepted a \$50,000 cheque inside the White House, in apparent breach of federal rules barring the use of government property to raise campaign funds. The donation came from Johnny Chung, a Democratic fundraiser who visited the White House 49 times, once with six Chinese businessmen, and claimed close ties with the President in business deals abroad.

Revelations about Democratic fundraising techniques are emerging daily, partly because congressional committees have secured access to White House documents. However, the new details about Mr Hubbell and the Riadys have the potential to be particularly embarrassing to President Clinton. They may establish that some of the main figures in the White-water investigation into questionable property deals in Arkansas, which dogged Mr Clinton throughout his first term, also have a central role in the present controversy about fundraising.

It was reported months ago that Mr Hubbell was paid \$100,000 by companies controlled by the Riady family, for reasons that have not yet come to light. The new details suggest that payments were four times the level previously thought and flowed from a large number of companies.

Some of those companies were guests at White House coffee mornings or stayed as overnight guests in the Lincoln Bedroom. The question of whether these opportunities for meeting the President were implicitly ways of soliciting money is at the heart of the controversy.



Cambodian police force Manfred Gast to show his face to photographers in Phnom Penh yesterday and, below, one of his alleged victims

'Child sex gangster' held in Cambodia

FROM AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE IN PHNOM PENH

A CANADIAN national arrested on child prostitution charges is a member of a "well organised, international" paedophile ring, Cambodian police claimed yesterday.

Manfred Horst Albert Gast, 53, who was born in Germany but lives in Alberta, Canada, was arrested in a Phnom Penh guest house after six boys alleged that he had had sex with them.

police said. They displayed scores of photographs they said were seized from Mr Gast's room, showing young boys in sexually explicit poses. They said they had found more than 200 pictures.

"We believe that he sells these photographs," said Police General Skadavy M Ly Roun, chief of Cambodia's Interpol department, which made the arrest with local police. "It is a well organised and international ring." He said Mr Gast had large sums of money in a Thai bank, possibly earnings from such deals.

Formal charges against Mr Gast are to be made in Phnom Penh municipal court today. Mr Gast claimed he was being mistreated in police custody but police said he was refusing to eat. Mr Gast could face ten to 20 years in prison if convicted.

Children's rights workers have said Cambodia is becoming a haven for child sex offenders as other countries in the region, such as Thailand and the Philippines, have launched anti-child prostitution campaigns.



Colombia rebuffs Clinton on drugs

FROM IAN BRODIE IN WASHINGTON

COLOMBIA has halted crop-dusting flights against drugs in an emphatic rebuke to President Clinton.

The measure was approved by President Samper and his associates, who were said to be insulted by Mr Clinton's decision to classify Colombia for the second year as failing to co-operate fully in the war on drugs.

In another embarrassment for the Americans, news leaked out of a hastily organised secret mission to Mexico City by senior White House officials to try to smooth over recriminations between the two Governments

just six weeks before Mr Clinton is due to visit Mexico.

The team sent to Mexico by Mr Clinton included Samuel Berger, national security adviser, and Barry McCaffrey, the anti-drugs chief. Their arrival had not been disclosed until a Mexican radio station blew their cover.

Colombia's swift and unexpected move has left Mr Clinton with a foreign policy dilemma. It means the suspension for an unknown period of a drug eradication programme in which crops producing cocaine and heroin were sprayed from the air. The aircraft were largely paid for

by Washington, often with American pilots. Washington had set great store by their success in curbing the flow of cocaine.

Helicopters escorted the flights into areas under the control of left-wing guerrillas. There have been gun battles as those on the ground try to protect the crops.

The main reason for President Clinton's decision to "de-certify" Colombia last week was that, by American calculations, the country's cultivation of coca plants had increased by 32 per cent in the past year. Colombia, the world's largest producer of

cocaine, has now overtaken Bolivia to become the second largest grower.

The Americans criticised high-level corruption in President Samper's administration and the way imprisoned drug barons continue to run their illegal operations from their comfortable cells.

Earlier, Colombians were angered by American criticism of their Congress, which cleared President Samper of charges that he took campaign contributions of \$3.7 million from the Cali cocaine cartel. American officials said the charge was "credible". President Samper denied it.

US critics savage 'Shine' pianist

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

DAVID HELFGOTT, the mentally ill Australian pianist whose remarkable story is told in the hit film *Shine*, has received a vicious drubbing from music critics at the start of a US tour.

Mr Helfgott, 49, has had standing ovations from spectators and is mobbed in the street by autograph hunters. The American public loves him and in a matter of days his list of US engagements has risen from three to 18. From the cushioned "elite" of the concert hall press box, however, there came yesterday a long, loud raspberry about his debut US recital.

The *Washington Post* accused him of artistic incoherence. "A painful and disturbing experience" was its verdict on Mr Helfgott's performance at the Symphony Hall in Boston. The *New York Times* found "little definition in the playing".

Another critic said that the man was not musician enough to deserve the privilege of playing in the Symphony Hall. "He sounds like a well coached child prodigy," grumbled another of what Scott Hicks, the director of *Shine*, called the "self-appointed guardians of the elite".

Boston concertgoers did not mind a hoot. At the end of the show they ran up to the front of the stage and clamoured to touch the pianist's long, lean fingers. Nor did they seem to mind the fact that throughout the concert Mr Helfgott talked to himself, grinned like a cat and twitched (he is almost exactly as he was depicted in *Shine* by the actor Geoffrey Rush).

The critics' attacks probably reflected an irritation that the musical agenda has been set by a film, and a non-American one at that, and that the high temples of culture are being taken over temporarily by *Shine* populism. American classical music critics tend to be pretty merciless. Given some of the discordant drivel their fraternity has endorsed in recent decades, however, it is hard to resist a frisson of satisfaction at seeing their exclusive game spoilt.

Mr Helfgott appears serenely undisturbed by the poor notices. "One mustn't be so serious," he said. "It's all a game. Must be grateful."

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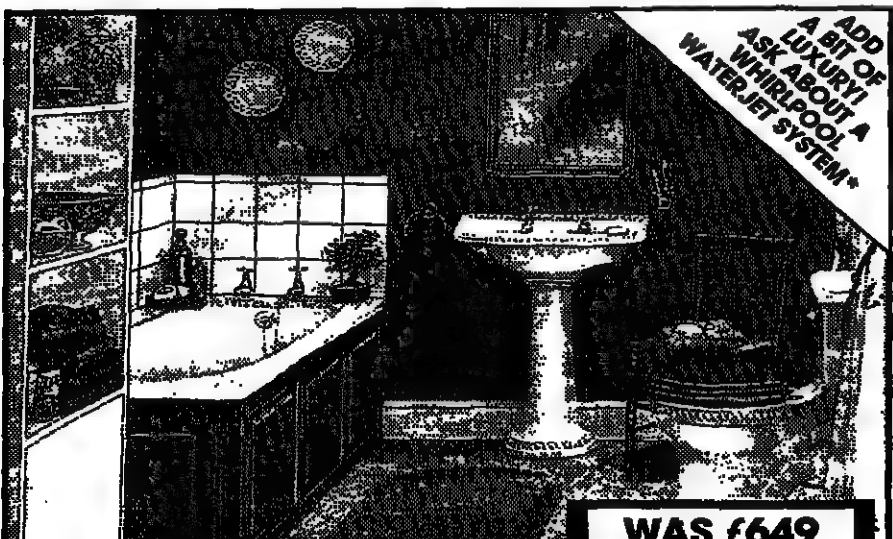


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Claire at 67, still in full bloom

There is an old link between Claire Bloom and the novelist Nina Bayden, in the person of young Richard Burton. When Miss Bayden was up at Oxford, the dashing green-eyed Welshman took her out to a decorous tea, and swiftly asked her to spend the weekend with him in London, where he had a key to Emyl Williams's flat. (She declined.)

Six years later Claire Bloom was on tour with Burton. He was newly married to Sybil, but this did not stop him from embarking on a snatched, ecstatic affair with Claire (her first) that lasted six thrilling years. "Delicious and impossible and forbidden."

Forty years on, Miss Bloom, now 67, and Miss Bayden, 72, met on the set of *Family Money*, the dramatisation of Bayden's novel, which starts on Channel 4 next week starring Bloom. They discussed how amazingly beautiful Burton was in youth, not yet pock-marked, and what an extraordinary, magnetic personality.

Burton still has this effect on people: Bloom's almost inaudibly soft voice becomes animated when she talks of him. She still has a recording of his reading of Donne. "He was one of those Svengali types who like to teach you and mould you; he knew reams and reams of poetry." When, years later, Burton told her that being married to Liz Taylor was "like waking up to Christmas every day", Bloom felt a murderous urge.

The last time we met, three years ago, she was playing Madame Ranevskaya in snow-covered Cambridge, Massachusetts. In the luminous winter light she was fragilely beautiful and disquietingly reticent, which made me goggle on. Only later did I discover that she was going through hell. I knew that her marriage to Philip Roth had disintegrated, but did not realise quite how painful it was. That's when she embarked on her autobiography, *Leaving A Doll's House*. "I had to have a big project to keep me from thinking about anything."

It is almost too obvious to decode the masochism in her well-written hook: damaged childhood (ineffectual father, who abandoned his family); feelings of being an outsider ("the English rose who always felt very Jewish"); an almost too devoted mother. Claire was already a film star at 17, destined to become the tragic heroine she played, submitting to three neurotic husbands. She left Rod

The indestructibly beautiful Claire Bloom on her undying passion for Burton — and her latest venture on Channel 4

Steiger like Nora in *A Doll's House*, in order to become Hilda Elkins's *Blanche du Bois* in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

When she met Philip Roth, she might have known that a man already seething with rage about having been trapped in his previous marriage would soon see her again "in paroxysms of silent anger". She noted the warning signals. "But of course," she writes, "the situation would be different with me."

They married after 14 years together; she was locked in with a willful, egocentric bully who refused to have Anna, her daughter by Steiger, in their home. He knew that if she could abandon her daughter for him, there was nothing she would not do — and wrote another of his self-revelatory novels featuring a priapic faithless husband named Philip and a dull, weepy wife named Claire. I am not the first to express incredulity that she failed to see that he would be impossible.

"Yes..." says Claire, sighing. "But you always think it is going to be different. And there were also very wonderful times. In the main it was an enriching relationship. So it was very confusing. I could never have foreseen the end. He became a different person, somebody I couldn't have lived with for two minutes." At the end, her fax machine spewed out wicked bills from him, demanding repayment for their holidays together, for the hours (at \$150 an hour) he spent advising her on scripts.

He became capricious to the point of insanity, calling her back with flowers and messages and then dumping divorce papers on her, accusing her of cruelty and inhumanity. Astonishingly, even after all these torments, she describes a dream of returning to the Con-

necticut farmhouse they had shared, and finding everything the same.

"It was the truth. I was full of longing to return to the domestic hearth, with the fire crackling, the life I'd had, which had gone. But that door was closed."

Such an unrealistic neediness may stem, she thinks, from her bizarrely close relationship with her mother. "She was a most remarkable woman. But there is a downside: her support made me terribly overdependent, and it took me many, many years to find myself as an adult female."

Perhaps that was the reason I clung to relationships, after they should have finished."

Roth bestirred her life, but other men line up in her story: Olivier, Yul Brynner, even Elvis, from whom she fled. We do not discuss "The Unmentionable" second husband, Hilda Elkins, but

I said I had just heard Rod Steiger on *Kaleidoscope* saying he would "never forgive" Claire Bloom for her book. She was so taken aback I instantly regretted telling her.

"Anything you write will rub someone up the wrong way," she said. "I know that even from my first, silly, modest little autobiography, 14 years ago, which said nothing about anybody. I still got reproachful letters."

But it is time to leave the past. She is still in the bloom of her prime. Her beauty, which "didn't hurt" when she was being cast by Chaplin in *Gaslight*, remains. She is sure her uncanny likeness to his wife, Oona, got her that part: Chaplin was a lifelong friend and mentor.

In *Family Money* she plays a widow whose family would like to get their hands on her Islington house, worth half a million. "I like Fran. She's a rather ordinary woman who makes a kind of life for herself, which I think women will understand. She's very passive at first (espe-

cially compared with Margaret Tyacke, who plays her terrifying sister) but she does come to life."

In the opening scene, where Fran is beaten up in the street, we see her leaving the cinema and dining alone in a restaurant. I found this unlikely, but Claire Bloom does it a lot in New York: "I often go for spaghetti and a glass of wine at the pasta place across the street, and I find it comforting to take my book to a coffee-shop full of people."

Does she go alone to movies in New York? "Yes! It's 1997! Good God, I'm not going to wait for a millionaire to take me out. I prefer to go to museums by myself too. I can concentrate better. I'm going to *Lohengrin* by myself tonight. Opera is my one great passion."

In London, she was staying at her daughter's house — Anna, now an opera singer, was away in Palermo — and seeing her brother John, a film editor (*Gandhi*, *First Wives Club*), and her friend Gaia Servadio.

When we last met she had just found herself an apartment in New York. It was a momentous juncture ("I had to have some place to live, to get back a normal life"), since when she has established a singleton's routine, embracing the health club, Central Park, the Society Library, with its peaceful reading room, "the nearest thing to the London Library", friends and work.

As she approaches the aunts-and-dowagers age — she was only 49 when she played the matriarch Lady Marchmain in *Brideshead Revisited*, "and it would have been bloody stupid to turn that down on narcissistic grounds" — she now does one-woman concoctions of *Shakespeare's Women* and *Women in Love*. She also does a four-hour reading from *Anna Karenina*. (There is a touch of Karenin in Roth; and Claire would certainly have fallen for a Vronsky.)

"People say, 'don't you wish you'd had an easier time?', but what's the point of that? Things happened as they did, and I got a lot from them. You can't say what if... 'What if' does not exist."

"That's one reason I am astonished to find myself quite alone and doing all right — like Fran. As I say to myself: 'Considering everything that's happened, you're doing as well as you can.'" She laughs, and her dark eyes no longer look wistful.

● *Family Money* starts on March 16, Channel 4, 9pm.

THE VALERIE GROVE INTERVIEW



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The prime of Miss Claire Bloom: "I am astonished to find myself quite alone and doing all right"

Pop groups should not make comebacks, says Fiona Russell Powell

For the past month, posters have been plastered all over London advertising tonight's comeback gig at the Shepherd's Bush Empire of the 1980s pop group, ABC. The lead singer, Martin Fry, is shown with a gold lamé jacket slung over his shoulder: a reference to the days in 1982 when ABC wore similar suits and had a platinum-selling album, *London O' Love*. Where he got his current lamé suit is a mystery, as he ceremoniously flushed the original down the toilet in a Japanese hotel at the end of the band's world tour. How do I know this? Because Stephen Singleton, the founder member of ABC, told me. He will not be on stage tonight and nor will I, although I, too, was once a member of ABC, masquerading under the name of Eden, while working as a journalist for *The Face*.

In fact Martin Fry is now the only remaining member of ABC, aided by Glenn Gregory of Heaven 17. During the past few years, I and other former ABC members had noticed that Martin seemed to have rewritten the history of the band. The way he tells it, ABC was his idea. Not so. ABC started life as Vice Versa, a Sheffield electronic three-piece formed by Singleton (sax and rhythm guitar) and Mark White (guitar).

One day, Stephen and Mark rang a Mancunian student, who had interviewed them for his fanzine, and asked him to step in at the last minute to replace the 16-year-old member who had chickened out of her first gig. I was the chicken. He was Martin Fry. In 1980 they changed the musical direction of the band and the name to ABC, and brought in drummer David Palmer and bassist David Robinson.

The next three years saw ABC on the rise, gaining critical and popular acclaim with their trademark funk/pop, only to blow it all in 1983 with a heavier release that many found hard to understand, *Beauty Stab*.

David Palmer was the first to go. During a gig at Hammersmith Palais, he broke into an impressive 15-minute drum solo. "It was only after he left that we realised it had been his audition for The Yellow Magic

Survivors of the lamé army



Top: Fiona Russell Powell Above: ABC started life in Sheffield as Vice Versa

Orchestra," said Stephen, who left after rows with Martin over *Beauty Stab*.

I remained friends with everyone, and in the summer of 1984 went round to Martin and Mark's Holland Park flat to hear what they had been working on. It had the promise of another hit album. They said: "We'd like you to join the band." "But I can't play anything," I pointed out. "It doesn't matter. You can pretend. We want you because you've got a great look."

At the time, I was Miss Nightclub Queen, wearing clothes made by my friends Leigh Bowery and John Galiano, with a number one crew cut, and a great collection of wigs and platform shoes. It was a freaky, original image and one that they wanted the new-look ABC to have. An American, David Yarritu, a bald homosexual midget, completed the four-piece. I joined ABC for several

reasons. The money was enticing and I wanted to experience the music industry from the inside. But perhaps the principal expectation I had was one of non-stop fun. And we did have some laughs, at first. However, the British public did not take kindly to the new image, comparing us to The Addams Family. It was a different story in America though, where the LP did very well. We also had a number one dance record. Things began to go pear-shaped when Martin disappeared. All became clear in September 1985, when we flew to LA to do the US versions of *Top Of The Pops*. Martin arrived at Heathrow looking ghastly. It turned out he had Hodgkin's disease. He could only perform after being pumped full of drugs. The rest of the time he was in bed. Mark, whom I had known since I was 15, now required an appointment before I could see him. David

Yarritu had been sacked as he had grown too big for his tiny boots. Everything fizzled out and they decided my services were no longer needed.

I did not hear from Martin again until he rang me about this article. I expressed my opinions about defunct bands reforming. I find it rather sad as it flies in the face of our youthful ideals. "I am not a sad man," Martin declared emphatically.

So why is he going on the road after all this time (14 years since he played live, six since the last LP)? "Because I'm passionate about it. I believe in these songs." I've heard the new album, *Skywriting*, and my immediate reaction was: time warp. It's as if the past ten years haven't happened.

I shall be down at the front tonight but probably not singing along. I joked to Martin that I'll wear my gold lamé suit. "Fl, it takes balls to wear one of those. The lamé army. We're survivors."

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'I hated my time on the Arts Council'

ARTS AND THE LOTTERY

For a period I was on the Arts Council and I have never disliked anything so much. Norman St John-Stevens, now Lord St John of Fawley, was leant on by Margaret Thatcher and forced to appoint me. It was, he said, like appointing an atheist to the Bench of Bishops. He was right, of course, as I have always held the view that the whole of that organisation should be closed permanently. It seems to me a most expensive way of giving away money. I have always advocated that the great

People should buy art because they like it, much as they go to football matches because they like football.

I do not approve of the National Lottery. It is shameful that the arts in Britain can only be supported by the proceeds of gambling. The lottery is destructive of small businesses, destructive of charities and, in effect, just another form of indirect taxation. I do not understand why Mr Major's Government, which wants to privatise any state organisation that comes into its sights and then lay its hands on the cash that it can realise from selling these organisations, should set up the National Lottery, which is likely to become one of the largest nationalised industries that has

Confessions of THATCHER'S BAGMAN

national companies and galleries, or you do not. Keeping them perpetually short of money is achieving neither a real economy, nor the point of having these institutions in the first place.

As for the avant-garde arts, I would simply give the cash, if it must be given, to local councils. They are just as capable of distributing it as the members of the Arts Council. For the backing of artistic talent is a lottery. To the funds that are distributed thus could be added the money saved by abolishing the Arts Council.

Industry should be encouraged to help the arts in the regions where it operates, just as industries help politics and charity in those regions. It is good business sense to do this and needs no subsidies. As for individuals, there should be no tax incentive for them to buy art, as is the system in America, for one person's tax incentive is another person's tax increase.

been seen in years. The whole idea is not only daft and dubious, but it will lead Britain's people straight back to a dependence on the handouts of the nanny state, this time with the nanny heavily disguised as the National Lottery. Its funds, however, will be controlled, albeit at second hand, by ministers and the taxpayer will still pay in the end.

I hated my time on the Arts Council, an organisation that struck me as having little to do with the arts. The meetings were tedious, the chairman, Kenneth Robinson, a former Labour Minister of Health, was pedestrian. I found the staff both arrogant and idle. I was chairman at meetings of the sub-committee of theatrical touring, and the two officials sitting either side of me used to pass notes to each other behind my back and then giggle girlishly, which I



"Appointing me to the Arts Council was, said Norman St John-Stevens, like appointing an atheist to the Bench of Bishops. He was right, of course"

suppose was only to be expected from one of them, who was a girl. I ignored their rudeness for several meetings but then I decided to put a stop to it. I moved my chair back from the table. They did the same, and continued with their notes. I moved again, and so it went on. Children in kindergarten would have known better how to conduct themselves. There was something terribly childish about these officials, in their grand Piccadilly premises, tossing sweets to artists. They spoke of artists as "clients" and of their work as "product".

It was never satisfactorily explained to me why the touring committee should spend money on a tour of Oklahoma, for if one show did not need a subsidy it was that. At the same time they enthused about Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical, the officials wanted to halt the touring of the Glyndebourne opera. I could not stop the former folly, but I did put a stop to the latter, and Glyndebourne continued to tour.

Extract from *Once A Jolly Bagman* by Alistair McAlpine (©Alistair McAlpine, 1997), published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson on March 13, at £20. Times readers can buy *Once A Jolly Bagman* for just £16 (a saving of £4) by calling The Times Bookshop, 0990 134459.

NORMAN TEBBIT bore the cross of Archer with considerable fortitude. I am not such a kindly spirit, and hoped that Archer would soon turn his attention elsewhere than Central Office, although sadly there was no hope of his promotion to a junior minister. ... In 1986, help came one morning at breakfast in the Palace Hotel in Bournemouth, where the party conference was being held. At another table was David Montgomery, the Editor of the *News of the World*, with an elegant

JEFFREY ARCHER

young woman. She introduced herself as Grania Forbes, the new political editor of the *News of the World*. She had, she said, an embarrassing story about Jeffrey Archer. It was alleged, and subsequently proven to be groundless, that Archer had been consorting with prostitutes. We were fairly surprised at this tale. I was sorry for Archer, although it did not turn out so

badly for him. As Margaret Thatcher pointed out, Archer, while he often got the party and himself into awkward scrapes, always got out of them. On this occasion he was awarded the highest libel damages ever at that time.

After Archer's resignation, Norman Tebbit and myself were able to get on with the business of winning the next election, without reading the *Evening Standard* each day in terror of finding yet another Archer gaffe uttered in some remote part of the British Isles.

NORMAN LAMONT

IT IS strange how men, and perhaps more so their wives, make a point of saying how difficult Margaret Thatcher was when in power. I never found this, although I was not accustomed to working for people. She can also be remarkably tolerant of failure. The only scandal that, to my knowledge, she took any interest in was that of Norman Lamont, a junior minister in charge of tourism, who had taken to calling on the viva-

cious and extremely attractive widow Olga Polizzi. He was doing just this when a former boyfriend of Olga's arrived to try to effect a reconciliation. Richard Connolly, a large but elegant Irishman, was furious to find Lamont in her house. Their row ended in a brawl and trying desperately to escape, using his red dispatch box as protection, Lamont

received a blow to the eye. He explained his swollen face by saying he had walked into a filing cabinet. The press, however, was told another story. The minister had been seen hanging around Bayswater Road, shouting abuse at Connolly, who was apparently giving as good as he was getting.

Margaret Thatcher was in-

trigued by this story and asked me for the truth. She laughed and laughed. "The whole thing is quite Gilbertian," she remarked. When asked does Margaret Thatcher have a sense of humour, I always reply in the affirmative.

When ministers grumbled that Margaret Thatcher was tiresome and difficult, I used to compare her to a great diva, difficult off stage, but pure magic when she came to grips with an aria.

'My dyslexia left me doubly blessed'

MY EDUCATION at Stowe was, in fact, a disaster. I left, I think, with three O levels; it may have been only two. In the event, this failure has served me well as I am able to criticise John Major's total lack of intellect with impunity. John Major is given to attacking those who criticise him, and who have achieved

SCHOOLDAYS

honours at Oxford or Cambridge, with the accusation that they patronise. I suffer no such disadvantage as I was on building sites and drinking in pubs while Major was still at school, trying to pass any sort of exam. I have always be-

lieved that there is no need for a formal education so long as you have the wit to realise that you must acquire an education as you go through life. At Stowe I had wondered whether I might become an architect. Such a profession

fell within the orbit of family acceptability, while to suggest that I became a writer or a painter, or even an art dealer, was out of the question. Not that I wanted to be any of these things, for it was firmly fixed in my mind that I should be a civil engineering contractor. Those who taught me were amazed that my father, whom they regarded as an intelligent man, could not realise that he had a son who, to put it succinctly, was "thick". "Your son," these teachers told my father, "is not clever enough to become an architect. He will not pass the necessary exams." They were right in that I would not have passed those exams. They were, however, wrong about which exams I would need to pass. I do not blame



Alistair McAlpine aged 3

them, for they sent me off into the world an innocent with no preconceived educational ideas and the world that they sent me into was a vast college where I set about identifying teachers, preying on their generosity both with their time and their wisdom.

I have always been lucky, but one piece of luck that I did not discover until 20 or so years after I left Stowe is that I am dyslexic. My dyslexia has left me doubly blessed, for what I lacked in ability to read and spell, I made up for with an active imagination. As for reading, I did not read before I was 11, but like a child kept back from a feast, I tucked in with a wild enthusiasm when I had the chance. I read and read. My hatred of sport allowed me the time and I read whenever I should have been playing games. I read when I should have been doing my Latin prep.



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Your state pension is safe with me

Tony Blair is not persuaded by Peter Lilley's privatisation plan

There is no doubt that the Government's pension proposals are bold. For some commentators that is enough. And in one sense, by opening up the debate, they give whoever forms the next government the chance to conduct the debate more sensibly. But the question is: are the proposals right and are they thought through?

Most people find the detail of pensions so hard that they give up on it. But the detail here is crucial, and in essence the Conservative scheme is simple. It is to pay now and hope to save later.

Ministers want to create a fund now that will build up over time and so avoid the need for a later generation of pensioners to be paid a state pension. That fund will come in part from taxpayers' money and in part from removing tax relief on contributions to private pensions. Whether that is right or not manifestly depends on whether the balance is fair between what taxpayers are to pay now and what a future generation will gain; and also, of course, on the cost and viability of the government's guarantee if anything should go wrong.

This requires an immense amount of detailed work. It is not clear it has anywhere near been carried out. But let me try to be constructive. There is an ageing population, and unless we plan for that it could create a crisis both for tomorrow's elderly and their children and grandchildren.

We also recognise the value of secure pension schemes based on investment. Our policies will be underpinned by the need to encourage savings. And we agree that many people would rightly like to see part of their pensions invested in secure schemes in which they have a clear stake. But how does the privatisation of all state pensions measure up to the challenge of providing adequate, secure, retirement incomes in the future?

There will be a huge up-front cost to be met by the taxpayer. At its height, £7 billion a year — £150 billion cumulatively by 2040. If Labour had launched such a proposal, we would have been hounded until we said where the money was to come from.

Many of today's pensioners will be surprised that the Government wants to pay £150 billion to privatise the pension system while offering nothing to those in poverty today. We know that the demographic changes will really begin to bite between 2020 and 2040, but in those 20 years it seems that the Government's priority is to be to spend £150 billion privatising the state pension system. The question is, do the claimed benefits justify the certain costs and increased insecurity?

The first claim is that pensions will be better. The fear must be that for reasons of market failure or changes in government policy, "Basic Pension Plus" would produce no more than people would have received from the basic state pension. And if investment returns are poor, the taxpayer will have to pay a second time

to underwrite the guarantee. We are told that the great prize is that in 2040, people on average earnings could, if things go well, retire on £175 a week. But this is only marginally more than their counterparts today, and as a proportion of average income it will be much less. The biggest challenge is to provide pensions for those on low and modest incomes. But the Government has not told us what sort of pensions they can expect, and who will pick up the bill.

Peter Lilley says abolishing Serps is affordable, but in doing so the Government would deny people choice in their pension arrangements and remove the benchmark against which individuals can judge whether personal provision is best for them.

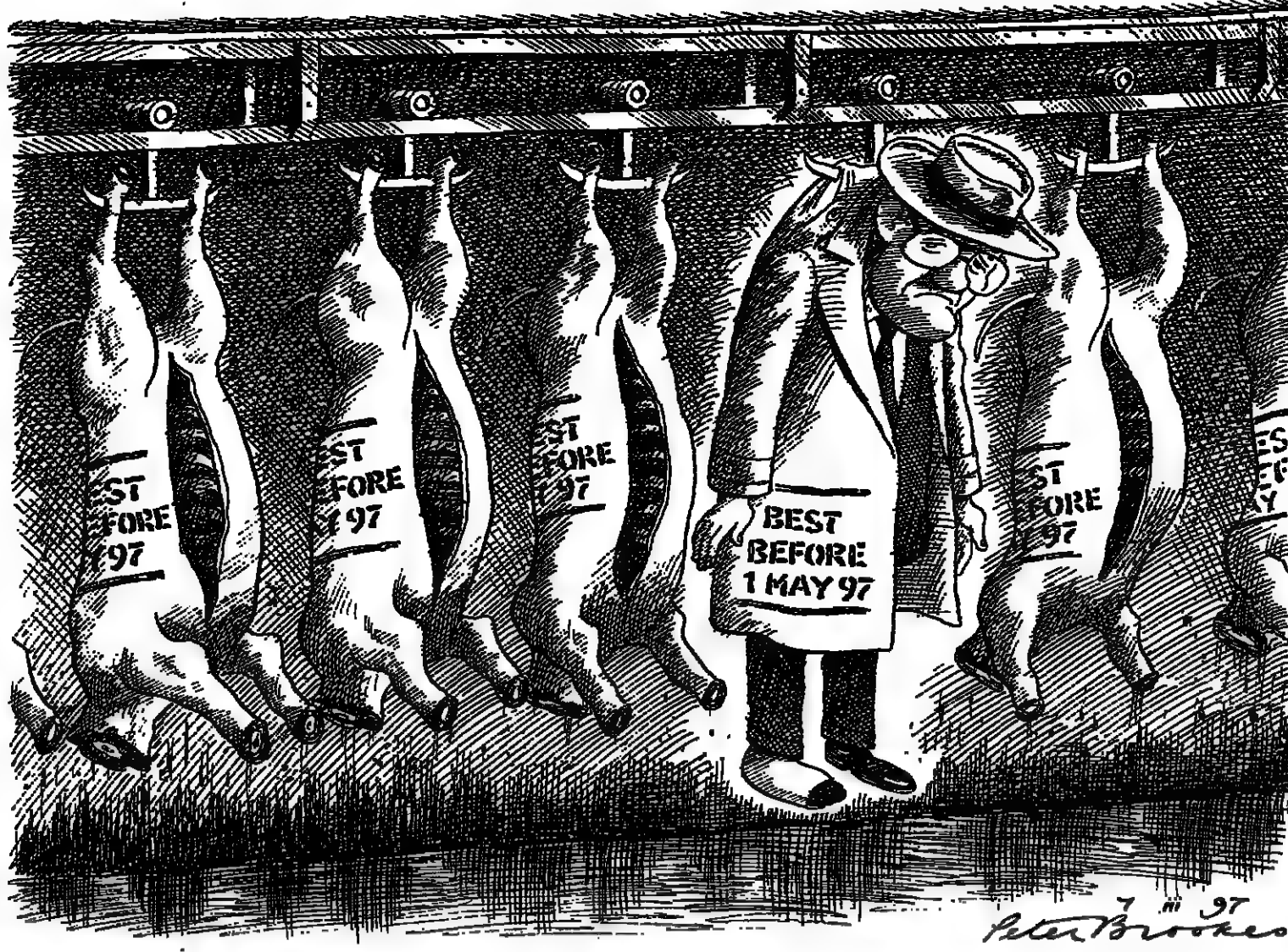
And have the regulatory problems of private provision been solved? I do not believe that the mis-selling and high costs that so many have suffered in the past ten years are or were inevitable. They came about because the Government got its partnership with the private sector wrong. We will get it right.

Labour is determined to find the right balance between state and private provision, and a fair balance between the needs of today's pensioners and those of tomorrow. The State should not promise more than the working population can afford, but it should not and need not abandon all responsibility. We will retain the basic state pension as the foundation on which people can plan for their retirement. No overwhelming case has yet been made for the abolition of Serps, and so, because we believe in choice, we will retain it for those who wish to remain within it.

Unlike the Tories, we want to address the problems faced by many people today who would like to be able to join an approved, value-for-money, flexible funded pension scheme. Every possible penny of their savings should be working for their retirement, not eaten up in high charges. They should not be unfairly penalised for changing jobs, being out of work or having children. The scheme should be run in their interests. We will encourage partnerships between the financial service industries, employers' organisations and others to offer these new stakeholder pension schemes. We have consulted widely on our proposals and will continue to do so in government.

The provision of adequate pensions is one of the most critical and difficult challenges confronting all industrialised countries. Policy must be sustainable for the long term: people cannot afford to have their plans thrown into chaos by unpredictable swings in policy. We should not be afraid to look at any idea, whatever its source, for the right solution. But policies that start from ideology — whether the belief that the State should do everything or that it should do nothing — are unlikely to produce the best outcome.

We will keep Serps and the basic state pension



Heroes of transition

What do Henry VII, Gorbachev and Neil Kinnock have in common?

Sausage prices twice as high. / Where's the vodka for us to buy? / All we do is sit at home / Watching Gorbys drone and drone. This Russian ditty, loosely translated, is quoted by Doder and Branson in their book *Gorbachev*. They sum him up: Mikhail Gorbachev presided over "a transitional period between authoritarianism and democracy".

What a bleak phrase! What an epitaph — if that is all he gets — for the man who, more than any, arranged for the Soviet Union a revolution almost as earth-shattering as the one that created it. That achievement has not found its rightful place in the middle of the mantelpiece of modern Russian history.

Or not for the Russians, anyway. A prophet without honour in his own country, Gorbachev is described by those of his countrymen I have heard in terms more of irritation than respect. Acknowledgement, where given, is grudging. His is not a name to be conjured with in the popular politics of the age that has succeeded him. The man who ended Soviet totalitarianism, arranged for free elections, a free press, freedom of worship, new legislatures and a multi-party system; the man who introduced a pluralist economy and opened the Soviet Union to the world outside; the man who almost single-handedly ended the Cold War and the arms race; who invented glasnost and perestroika... the man with whom Margaret Thatcher could do business — is consigned by his own and the succeeding generation to a drab ante-room near the entrance to a new world.

This is not because the new world has proved ungenerous to Russians — though for many it has. Gorbachev was disregarded while hopes for the future were still high. Why? Because he was part of the cold half-light before the dawn: clumsy, transient, insubstantial. Those who hanker for a return to the enfolded dark would go back to the era before him; those who push forward into the glare just want to leave him behind.

Is this not so often the fate of the men and women who serve as bridges between eras in our history? Resented by the era from which they form a bridge and discredited by that in which they establish the bridgehead, they are seen by the old guard as heresy and by the avant garde as embarrassment. Yet they led the way. They showed courage while courage was still needed. They looked into the unknown. With hindsight their vision seems incomplete, over-cau-

tious. The first forays into new thinking usually do. But what vision it was at the time!

For Henry VII, "vision" would be the wrong word; he had foresight. He is the most underrated of the Henries. Shakespeare tackles the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Eighth but omits the Seventh Henry, who laid the administrative and fiscal foundations for the glories of the Elizabethan age in which Shakespeare wrote. Learning young to think for himself (his mother was 14 when he was born), he ended the Wars of the Roses by his marriage to Elizabeth; concluded a peace with France and formed an alliance with Spain by marrying his son to Catherine of Aragon. He married his daughter to James IV of Scotland, and settled that war too. Perhaps William Hague should marry John Major's daughter, Elizabeth of Huntingdon.

Above all, Henry was that rather unfashionable thing, an administrator. He governed in a hands-on way described by Francis Bacon, as "a nearness, but yet with a kind of justice". You could say he helped invent the English State, with its particular regard for fiscal probity and the rule of law. With the Star Chamber he sorted out a chaotic administration of justice. "His times," says Bacon, "for good Commonwealth's laws did excel." They were "the pre-eminent virtue and merit of this King". He sponsored explorers like John Cabot, to boost trade — his constant preoccupation. With the stability he brought, commerce flourished.

Henry was a hoarder, fabulously successful in raising taxes. He left England at peace, and the Exchequer (and the Crown) in better shape than any before him and many since. He placed the State on a sound footing. He was therefore considered boring.

Described as "a tired and anxious-looking man, with small blue eyes and bad teeth", Henry was famously short on charisma; but there is a deeper reason why his name lacks lustre. Transitional figures such as Gorbachev and Henry address a need which succeeding ages view as glaring. This (we therefore suppose) required no great foresight. But our standpoint is the very terrain they

have made safe for us. They constructed the compass. They made the obvious obvious. To be dismissed as having done no more than the obvious can be a backhanded compliment of the highest order.

Richard Nixon has suffered a similar fate. Assisted by Willy Brandt (another key neglected figure of transition), Nixon was the father of the East-West détente in which Mikhail Gorbachev flourished. He recognised China. He visited Beijing. He pulled American troops out of the Vietnam War and the quasi-imperialist attitudes that accompanied it. Succeeding Goldwater as presidential candidate, he rescued the Republican Party from itself. Launched with the rhetoric of a cold-warrior, his presidency proved a disappointment to the hardliners whose support he had courted; yet he could never be acceptable to liberal America. The resulting rather unloved image, of a political fixer without bearings, was probably critical in sinking him when Watergate came; yet comparable scandals have failed to sink Presidents better regarded by the voters. Nixon bridged two traditions in American politics, disappointing both.

Edward Heath should sympathise. The first modern Tory Prime Minister, he took British Conservatism to the very doorstep of "Thatcherism". Beginning his career in the whip's office, he helped to ease out the party's ageing leader, Churchill. A carpenter's son, he promoted a grocer's daughter, part of a transformation of his party from an old boys' network into a meritocracy. He took Britain, and British Conservatism, into Europe. He took a first brave swipe at trade unionism. Yet says his biographer, John Campbell "Heath's career appeared to end in more complete isolation, obloquy and embarrassment than any other in modern times".

As with Adolfo Suárez, in Spain, the succeeding age remembers only that he who ushered it in, loaded with the baggage of what had gone before, finally stumbled. Suárez ought to be a

20th-century hero. He came up through the ranks of the totalitarian politics of General Franco, but secretly impressed the King. Seen as a reactionary nonentity, his appointment by Juan Carlos as Prime Minister in 1976 was greeted in *El País* with "¡Que error! ¡Que imenso error!" Without democratic legitimacy, Suárez had to run the Government which would introduce democracy, dismantling the very system that had produced him. This he accomplished with skill, nerve, generosity and astonishing decisiveness. His Government legalised the Socialists and the trade unions. He won Spain's first election, a year later. "Rather to his surprise," says John Hooper in *The New Spaniards*, Spain found itself a decentralised nation of home-ruled regions.

But Suárez lacked the skills of a party leader, and, in the party system he had helped create, faltered. He was replaced, later ennobled, and is now less remembered than his successful Socialist successor, Felipe González. But González, and modern Spain, owe everything to Suárez. Just over the frontier in Portugal, another European nation owes much to — but hardly remembers — the man who achieved the incredible leap from Third World dictatorship to European democracy: Mario Soares, a hero in my transitionalists' hall of fame.

Neil Kinnock deserves a place there too. We gasp at the achievements of Tony Blair, who came rather late to courage. We salute the memory of John Smith, who proved timid but was redeemed by death. But at the record of the man who kicked over the Militant tables and wrenched his party away from the past, we only snigger. Tony Blair is not the originator of new Labour; he is the product of it. Mr Kinnock was seen by the socialist companions of his youth as selling out on socialism; and among Labour's rootless young newcomers it is not fashionable to acknowledge the bravery of those who were brave when to be brave you did have to be brave. Mr Kinnock's reputation is therefore lost in a limbo between old Labour and new. But it was he who ushered in the new.

Mr Kinnock looks happy in his new job. Suárez is a duke. Heath a curmudgeon. Nixon never recovered. Soares is hardly remembered and Henry VII we have all but forgotten. To Henry, then, and fellow-transitionals in every institution, large and small, let us raise our glasses to the tired and anxious little men with small blue eyes and bad teeth.

Matthew Parris

Cat flap

THERE is an eerie howl emanating from the back alleys of Whitehall, as Humphrey the Downing Street cat prepares for life without the trappings of power. Under the Tories, he is cosseted and cared for. Labour's big enchiladas, however, are not cat-lovers. Cherie Blair has been telling friends she finds cats unhygienic.

At the moment, Humphrey has the run of Downing Street. He



Where next for Humphrey?

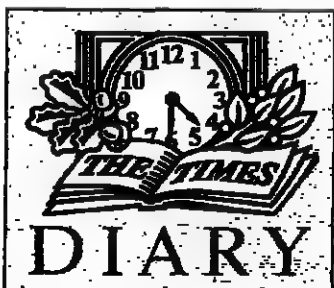
comes in and out of the back door of No 10 at will, then jumps over to No 11 where he is welcomed by Gillian Clarke, the Chancellor's wife, with a bowl of catfood. Mrs Clarke even wears a cat-decorated pinny to make Humphrey feel at home.

Gordon Brown, not a pinafore man so far as we know, would be far too busy with his Hayek and Friedman textbooks to bother about Kite-Kat. The Blairs, with three children already, do not need any more hungry mouths.

One option is for Humphrey to go with the Clarkes or Majors. Neither family, however, has yet signed the adoption papers.

The only ones glad to see him go may be the birds around Downing Street. The Prime Minister himself intervened when Humphrey started looking at them with the sort of drool that Sir Edward Heath reserves for a suet pudding.

● No Cartier at this year's Chelsea Flower Show. Despite having bagged a gold medal in three successive years, the company has



been refused the plot it requested. "Our garden is designed to fit a rectangle, not a square or an oval," says a man at the jewellers. "At Cartier, we are perfectionists."

Yas man

YASSIR ARAFAT, in New York this week, has let slip a detail about his relationship with the late Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat, of whom he was so bitterly critical after the 1978 Camp David accord. Arafat, in the course of a relaxed Manhattan conversation with Janet Wallach, co-author of an Arafat biography, told her: "I'll tell you a real secret, one I have never told anyone before. I met Sadat in 1950 and was his official

witness when he married, not for the first time, but the second." Yesterday's *New York Times* reported that Mrs Wallach replied: "What do you mean by official witness?" Arafat told her: "In this country you call it best man."

Wheels off

ELECTION TIME has heightened the political sensitivities of Sir George Young, the Transport Secretary, who is to open Richard



"Stop it, Eric. The Queen can't see you"

Branson's new West Coast main line on Monday. All was in order for a glittering event until the Sir George spotted the name of the train he was supposed to be blessing: *Red Renaissance*. "I think the irony would not have been lost on the voters," says one close to Sir George. A discreet phone call and Branson's lot agreed to find a less contentious title: *Mission Impossible*.

Raw nerve

THERE is no stopping Kristen McMenamy, the beanpole Canadian model. After being turned down by Versace for a first brave show, because she "wasn't couture enough", Miss McMenamy drove to his hotel and stripped. Striking a pose, in only high-heels and stringy lingerie, she sashayed into the Versace salon, posed and asked him: "Am I haute couture or what?" Signor Versace booked her.

Putting on

ABANDONING her populist roots, Mel B. Spice Girl, turned up in the Palm Room of the Ritz in Pic-



McMenamy: take that

cadilly on Wednesday. Just as the assorted duchesses and walkers were gathering up their shitz-tus after tea, in came Mel B wearing a loud 1960s trouser-suit of geometrical design, clasping the hand of a diminutive redhead.

Ignoring autograph hunters, she paraded to plunk herself in the laps of various startled Fink-Nortle types. Flirting with one centrepiece man she asked him what he had done that day, then cooed: "Poor, poor you, having to work."

P.H.S

Philip Howard



Not quite the new Machiavelli

It is a pretty diary, Lord McAlpine. But you must not call it Machiavelli. Your fiction, *The Servant*, was far less plausible than your bitchy, witty memoirs that we are serialising in *The Times*. And they are so much more fun than the maudlin self-pity of Ian Greet, who still cannot recognise that he was a cause of the sleaze disease, not its victim. Your *Servant* was a salute to *The Prince* by that other loose cannon of a courtier, Niccolò Machiavelli.

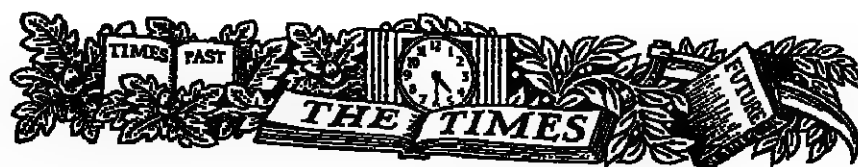
But there the similarity between you ends. Out of his surname we have coined an epithet for a rascal, and out of his Christian name a synonym for the Devil. *Hudibras*: "Nick Machiavel had n'er a trick. / Though he gives name to our Old Nick." In fact, this is folk etymology and false. Old Nick was around as a nickname for man's oldest enemy long before Machiavel schemed in Renaissance Florence and became a bogey to frighten babies of English xenophobes. But your surname has become a synonym for big concrete, and your Christian name is a name for dentists. Machiavel was a poor boy, son of a bankrupt, who was driven to educate himself very learnedly from books. You were born with a silver cement-mixer in your mouth; and your education was of the sort that can only be expected from Stowe.

Machiavelli was a serious player in the turbulent politics of his time, as ambassador, statesman and top sherpa to pave the way to summits for popes, emperors and kings. He invented military conscription in order to give Florence its own militia, and he is the father of political science. While your political talents lay in persuading rich climbers to take out their wallets and shake them into the clandestine bucket of Conservative Party funds. He was the sarcastic, thin-lipped ideologue, driven by his schemes to put the world, and especially Florence, to rights. You are the jovial Champagne Charlie, and never a proper Thatcherite. In retrospect you are certainly rude about the real Thatcherites. He was small, thin and biter. You are small, rotund and jolly.

Machiavelli never found anybody to live up to his ideal Prince. He was consistently let down, first by Cesare Borgia; then by Piero Soderini, the gonfalonier (Prime Minister) of Florence, then by the Magnificent Lorenzo de' Medici. You were not in the least interested in politics. But you are clearly in love with your Princess, your Mother/Mistress/Goddess substitute, who was the first person to give you a proper job, at the ripe age of 32. Your brown-nosed accounts of her feeding and stroking you are sweet, though in the saccharine *Hellio* mode.

Machiavelli was the proto-Thatcherite: "As a prince must be able to act just like a beast, he should learn from the fox and the lion. Because the lion does not defend himself against traps, and the fox does not defend himself against wolves. So one has to be a fox in order to recognise traps, and a lion to frighten off wolves." You left the politics to your Princess and enjoyed the buzz at the centre of things. Desperate times call for desperate measures. Machiavelli laid down the extreme Thatcherite insistence that while voters are bound by conventional morals, a ruler may use any means necessary to maintain power, no matter how unscrupulous.

Contemporaries said that you both made things up and got things wrong. But your anecdotes are more entertaining, because we know the victims. "The only part about the recession that was short and shallow was its cause: Norman Lamont." And who, apart from the victims, will not relish your Borgia siletto in the back of former chums? Geoffrey Howe's monstrous ego that at the Foreign Office was meant to be a great help to him. Ted Heath spitefully misleading his adviser into expecting the Sir he had waited all his life for. John Major hauled in to shake party money out of some shady Greek millionaire. Jeffrey Archer, for the sake of Britain, must never be given a job of any political consequence. Now, you are anxious to offer yourself to Your Magnificence with some token of your devotion to Her. Your little book may not have the ideological force of Old Nick's. But if your Princess has the sense of humour you surprisingly allege that she has, she will be laughing her heart off. With the cruel laughter of Medici Florence.



BUGS IN THE SYSTEM

A new E. coli incident: another case for institutional change

After yet another policy error, the Ministry of Agriculture has exhausted any remaining excuses. As far as consumers are concerned, the initials MAFF have come to mean More Awful Food Failings. The thoroughly inept performance of Douglas Hogg should not, however, be taken as the prime source of recent problems. The conduct of his department itself must be addressed. The failure to publicise the Hygiene Action Team's disturbing report into the practices of Britain's abattoirs was incompatible with a proper concern for public health.

None of the key issues was addressed by the Prime Minister or Mr Hogg in their statements yesterday. Neither man could provide a satisfactory response as to why a report that took 12 months to produce, involved site visits to every abattoir in the country and which generated such devastating conclusions, was not read by ministers. That would have been inexcusable in any circumstance. That it was still the case even after the announcement on BSE is astounding. Mr Hogg sought credit for the creation of the Meat Hygiene Service over Labour opposition. If its output was not deemed important enough to place on ministers' desks it is not clear why he bothered.

Despite this inattention, officials could have acted in place of their political masters: then matters would have been mitigated. Instead, a 54-page report, short and snappy by Whitehall standards, was rendered "more concise" and its author asked to recast it in a more positive spirit. It would ultimately merit only a single reference on one page of the Meat Hygiene Service annual report that was placed in the library of the House of Commons. Mr Hogg seemed

to think that represented an adequate level of consultation. Not many others will agree.

Even this sanitised version was not made publicly available. Instead the circulation was limited to certain industry insiders for fear of additional adverse publicity after the BSE announcement. Obviously the affected abattoirs needed to be informed of their defects to improve their future functioning. But the possible consequences of past misconduct demanded a much wider audience. The impression left is that, once again, the protection of its industry was the ministry's chief aim.

If the 81 recommendations outlined by the Hygiene Action Team had actually been implemented, that would have represented some recompense. Mr Hogg, however, could offer no such guarantee nor set out on what basis the various suggestions had or had not been accepted. The public has only the pledge of ministers that satisfactory action has been taken. There is little basis on which to have much faith in that.

No reform or reassurance from the Ministry of Agriculture can now pass muster. It cannot be made sufficiently distant from the producer interests that it is intended to regulate. A separate and independent agency, broadly modelled on the American Food and Drug Administration, reporting directly to the Department of Health and Parliament, is the sole device that might now restore confidence. It alone can attract and then deploy specialist officials of due standing. In the United States the FDA has critics who claim that it enforces its mandate with an excess of vigour. After the events of the past year an overzealous approach here would be very welcome.

LANDSLIDE DANGERS

Labour must beware bold prophecy

The polls point to a Labour victory at the next election. The vast majority of voters expects Labour to win. Even John Major at last alludes to the prospect of power changing hands. But when Labour politicians speak of their fondest hopes they are asking for trouble. Robin Cook let slip his expectations of a Labour "landslide" at a semi-private dinner on Wednesday night and the wrath of his leader descended upon him. "We take nothing for granted," Tony Blair said yesterday.

The Labour leader knows that all complacency is the enemy of victory. But public expectations of a Labour landslide risk disaster for the Opposition and bring good news for the Tories. The prospect of a massive Labour victory scares voters who fear a resulting licence to lurch to the left. It encourages low turnout of Labour supporters. And it increases the Liberal Democrat vote at the expense of Labour as people seek a counterbalance to an overmighty government. Most of all, though, the British like to punish triumphalism and to reward the underdog. Labour's biggest mistake in the last general election was to hold a rally in Sheffield at which Neil Kinnock behaved as if victory was in the bag.

For this reason, a Labour landslide is unlikely. It would also be psephologically unprecedented. Already Labour needs a swing bigger than the party has achieved since the War merely to govern with a majority. To gain a landslide — a majority of more than 100 — would entail a change in the climate of opinion as dramatic as that which swept Attlee into power in 1945.

Would a large majority be as dangerous, however, as many fear? In the past, it would have emboldened a Labour government to be more left-wing. Oddly, the opposite may be the case this time round. Mr Blair's instincts are to the right of his party. His main constraint in, for example, reforming the welfare state would be opposition from his own side. Since the new intake of Labour MPs will be predominately Blairite, a large

parliamentary majority would allow him to pass such legislation even if some of his older members rebelled.

The changes that have been introduced to the party in the past few years also make a lurch to the left unlikely. The pressures on Labour MPs are quite different from those in the 1970s and 1980s. Then they had to spend much of their time looking over their shoulders at their activists. The threat of deselection by the intimidating cabals who ran their constituencies forced many to be more left-wing than they would otherwise have wished. Now, deselection is in the hands of every member in a constituency, not just a narrow band of activists and shop stewards. The members themselves are much more moderate; nearly half have joined the party since Mr Blair became leader.

A majority of 50 or so ought to allow Mr Blair to govern comfortably for the full five years, even after deaths and by-election defeats. It would also take the sting out of the West Lothian Question. For Labour would have a majority in England as well as in the United Kingdom. Tory MPs would not be able to complain that Labour was using its Scottish MPs to force through English legislation, while English MPs had no influence on Scottish laws.

A landslide majority, however, does not always lead to good government. Party management becomes more difficult as many backbenchers are left without government or parliamentary jobs. Prime ministers with huge majorities are able to over-interpret their mandate. Margaret Thatcher did so after 1987, when she pressed too far with her "flagship" policy, the poll tax.

Francis Pym warned of the undesirability of landslides before the 1983 election. His declared preference was for a majority of between 50 and 100. Many who hope for a moderate but responsive Labour government will agree. Much smaller than 50 and a handful of leftwingers could sabotage Mr Blair's plans. Much larger than 100 and the arrogance of power could go to his head.

ANIMALS NOT VEGETABLES

All zoos must match the standards of the best

Animal welfare and the environment provoke strong political response among young voters. The transport of livestock, the threat to endangered species and the use of animals for experimentation are of passionate concern to activists who, a generation ago, would have marched and courted arrest in protest against nuclear weapons or Vietnam. Labour's warning yesterday that it would introduce tougher licensing laws for zoos, forcing the closure of those that do not meet the higher standards, is not only a welcome recognition of new thinking about their role and organisation; it is a smart vote-catching pledge to engage the attention of a new generation.

Labour is promulgating a new standard for zoos and wildlife parks that should make the cramped, claustrophobic and malodorous cages of the Victorian age a thing of the past. It does not want simply to give more space to captive creatures, however, or to allow animals to roam more freely in imitations of their habitat; zoos in future would be required to commit themselves to modern standards on welfare, education, science and conservation. A Captive Animal Welfare Council would be set up, similar to the existing Farm Animal Welfare Council, to draft and enforce high standards.

Such proposals have been welcomed by most larger zoos that are already engaged in redefining their *raison d'être*. The pro-

posals have the backing of the Federation of Zoological Gardens of Great Britain and Ireland, whose members include some of the biggest and best British zoos: in London, Chester, Bristol and Edinburgh. There are, however, some 300 zoos throughout the country and several still exemplify the commercial formula of exhibiting animals as "attractions", keeping them in poor conditions or next door to funfairs and theme parks. The worst would have to close.

All this makes sound ethical sense. London Zoo, which has been at the forefront of the debate on the conservationist mission of zoos since its own near-bankruptcy and closure, is about to reopen the famous Mappin Terraces, remodelled and redesigned to reflect the new standards demanded by animal welfare. Closed 12 years ago, they will form a single exhibit area that will be mainly devoted to sloth bears, a threatened species.

If the battle is nearly won in Britain, this is far from the case in much of Europe. Moscow Zoo, once a great institution, has become a slum, in urgent need of fresh funds. Around the Mediterranean, where attitudes to animal welfare are cavalier, there are shameful exhibits. A proposed European Union directive has been watered down to a recommendation, because of its political sensitivities; but it should be powerfully enjoined.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Labour plans for the constitution, tax and the unions

From Lord Marsh

Sir, In the considerable discussion of the Labour Party's plans for reform of the House of Lords there is an ominous silence on the possible future of the non-party crossbench peers.

With 312 members (more than the Labour and Liberal Democrat peers combined) and the complete absence of party allegiance we constitute the second largest group in the House and enjoy total immunity from the threats and blandishments of the party whips. That this is inconvenient for the party managers is understandable since, lacking both the desire and the party organisation to arrive at collective decisions, we can only listen to the arguments and vote on the merits as we see them. While this would be impractical in the Commons, in a second chamber concerned primarily with scrutiny and revision a minority of genuine independents must be of value.

Would it not be sad, and possibly irresponsible, if this unique element in our parliamentary system was allowed to disappear without public discussion?

I remain, etc.
RICHARD MARSH,
House of Lords.
March 4.

From Councillor Sir Ronald Watson

Sir, Sir Jeremy Bechem, the Labour chairman-designate of the new Local Government Association, states that "If I were Tony Blair and I wanted a shift in the proportion of money coming from local taxation I would move early: let the councils take the flak" (report, February 28). This will come as no surprise to those of us who have seen the Labour Party operate at local level in town halls up and down the country.

Labour Party members in local government are now desperately frustrated people. They solemnly but reluctantly adhere to their party's national line and are undoubtedly biding their time until they believe they will be able to exert real influence. Meanwhile, the Labour Party has been very coy about announcing its plans for anything in local government terms the only commitment that has been

made has been a phased release of the substantial amounts of capital held by councils in their housing accounts in order to fund a programme of new council-house building.

As local authorities will thus be denied the immediate benefits of the interest that accrues on these accounts the result will be an inflation across the country and rises in council tax.

The public should have no doubt that the Labour Party in local government is like a pressure cooker. It will not be long before the members explode, scattering socialism over their communities.

Yours sincerely,
RONALD WATSON
(Dukes Ward Representative, Conservative),
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council,
Town Hall, Southport, Lancashire.
March 4.

From Mr Geoffrey Hinton

Sir, The Shadow Chancellor's reassurances over Labour's taxation policy make no mention of rate-capping.

I well remember the unexpected doubling of my domestic rate by the Labour-dominated Oxford City Council both in 1987 and 1989, a draconian move which brought hardship to some householders, especially the elderly.

The current crisis in local authority financing is obviously impacting on the schools and social services. If Mr Brown and his colleagues promise, as they do, to reverse this process of decline without raising income tax or VAT levels the ratepayer will obviously have to foot the bill.

Yours faithfully,
GEOFFREY HINTON,
1 Northmoor Place, Oxford.
March 3.

From the General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress

Sir, You reported (Business, March 3) the opposition of the Director-General of the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD) to the Labour Party's plans for a legal framework for union representation and recognition.

The Director-General states in his

introduction to a research paper examining the two periods of statutory union recognition in the 1970s, commissioned by the IPD from the London School of Economics, that "Trade unionism is withering on the vine". Yet there are 7.3 million union members in the UK — still a large number by any standards — and 84 of the FT top 100 companies recognise trade unions.

He also claims that many companies have adopted alternative means of relating to their employees when all the evidence (for example the Government Workplace Industrial Relations Survey) suggests that there are simply no other methods of involving employees in the vast majority of non-union firms.

All current opinion research shows that unions are more popular than ever before, that there is strong support for a right to representation and union recognition where a majority of employees want it and that many working people would join a union if they were more confident they would not be penalised by their employer for so doing. It is disappointing that the IPD should take such an ill-balanced and frankly prejudiced view — incidentally, one not borne out by the LSE research paper itself.

Yours sincerely,
JOHN MONKS,
General Secretary,
Trades Union Congress,
Congress House,
Great Russell Street, WC1.
March 3.

From Mr Leslie Stanley

Sir, My first encounter with unemployment was during the first Attlee Government. The "once and for all" tax on capital imposed by Stafford Cripps in 1948 meant that employers were unable to buy new equipment or repair existing assets. There was no expansion of business.

Can Blair guarantee that such conditions will not obtain after a "once and for all" windfall tax?

Yours faithfully,
L. STANLEY,
47 Parsonsfield Road,
Banstead, Surrey.
March 2.

Sport letters, page 41

Attlees and Tories

From Margaret, Countess Attlee

Sir, May I comment on your report today that my stepson, the 3rd Earl Attlee, is to join the Conservative Party. To my knowledge my late husband, the 2nd Earl, never took the Labour whip in the House of Lords. Nor did he "help to found the SDP". When he succeeded to the title in 1967 he took leave of absence from his duties in the House and it was not until 1981, after the Limehouse declaration, that he decided to join what he described to me as "at last a party that I could believe in".

After the demise of the SDP, and within days before his death in July 1991, he had been in contact with the Tory whips in the House of Lords, expressing his desire to cross the floor and join them. At the time the Conservative Government had already been written off by the polls.

I find myself delighted that my stepson, too, has committed himself by pledging his allegiance to the Tories now, in their darkest hour, rather than wait for the outcome of the election.

Yours faithfully,
MARGARET ATTLEE,
42 Wildcroft Manor,
Pursey Heath, SW15.
March 6.

Paper values

From Mr Robert Neave

Sir, How can we not agree with Mr John Nye (letter, March 5) when he points out that the value of the Orton and Churchill papers lies merely in their content?

We derive so much pleasure from the poster of Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* which we purchased for, I think, £299. This sum did not include an auctioneer's premium, nor do we need insurance to keep it in the kitchen.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT NEAVE,
Myrtle Cottage,
Cucklington, Wincanton, Somerset.
March 5.

One of a kind

From Professor Emeritus Peter Yates

Sir, To prepare for the cloning era, dictionaries and lawyers will have to redefine the terms "person" and "individual".

I was once faced with this dilemma when a tutor brought to me an essay submitted by a student which was identical to one that he had had from a student in the previous year, the topic having been the same. I suggested that he mark it out of 50 and refer the student to his friend for the other half of the marks. I maintained, and the students eventually agreed, that there was only one essay.

To answer Mrs J. Hadfield's query (letter, February 28), the BBC was quite right to refer to the cloned sheep as "unique". There is only one rose called *Peace* though it appears in many gardens. Members of a clone, though separately mobile, remain one individual and, if human, should have only one vote and one pension.

Yours faithfully,
PETER YATES,
Beach House, Shore Road,
Silverdale, Carnforth, Lancashire.
February 28.

Vanunu plea

From Mr Leslie Waddington

Sir, The history of modern intellectual Judaism is associated with tolerance and respect for the individual. The State of Israel, in its initial kidnapping and continual imprisonment of Mr Mordechai Vanunu in the barbaric conditions described by Mr Andrew Neil (letter, February 24) and ignored by Mr David Harounoff (letter, February 28), is denying this tradition.

For Mr Harounoff to state that the main political parties in Israel support this situation is a very sad point and makes one wonder, with embarrassment, what has happened to that country.

Yours faithfully,
LESLIE WADDINGTON,
11 Cork Street, W1.
February 28.

From Mr Michael Halpern

Sir, Mr David Harounoff's spirited defence of Israel's treatment of Mr Vanunu claims also that it is supported by both Likud and the Opposition. That is as may be, but the West expects that only Third World dictatorships exact retribution from prisoners — political or otherwise — by incarceration in solitary confinement for a decade.

Such confinement amounts to a cruel and unusual punishment which breaches international standards of accepted behaviour.

Enough would appear to be enough.

Yours sincerely,
MICHAEL HALPERN,
Alington House,
Alington Road, Poole, Dorset.
February 28.

Israel's 'candid friends'

From Mr David Weizmann

Sir, I would strongly oppose the contention put forward by President Weizmann during his state visit to this country (report, February 27) that the job of Jews outside Israel is to support Israel, but to keep out of that country's politics.

Jews living outside Israel have as much right to criticise Israel as have Englishmen, Germans, Americans or anyone else to criticise their country, wherever they live, if they feel their policies are wrong.

Criticism must not be mistaken for enmity and Mr Malcolm Rifkind and others are undertaking the role of candid friends, who wish only for Israel and its neighbours to live in a lasting peace.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID WEIZMANN,
Orchard Cottage,
27 Grosvenor Road,
Caversham, Reading, Berkshire.
March 2.

Letters that are intended for publication should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number — 0171-782 5046.

Mary Magdalene, saint and sinner?

From Ms Susan Haskins

Sir, It is comforting to know that the Bible backs up the Reverend Toddy Hoare's contention (report and picture, February 25) that Mary Magdalene was not a prostitute but the first apostle.

The argument is taken from the New Testament and has been current for at least 1,700 years, since Hippolytus of Rome (d. 235) described her as the "apostle to the apostles" in his commentary on the *Song of Songs*.

Conventional theology no longer regards Mary Magdalene as a repentant whore. The idea that she was deviant from the Gospels but from her conflation in early Christian exegesis with the unnamed sinner in Luke (vii. 37, 38), who washed Christ's feet with her tears and dried them with her hair.

Her nakedness has been depicted since the late 13th century, based in part on her further confusion with Mary of Egypt, a legendary prostitute.

Yours faithfully,
SUSAN HASKINS,
12b Wilmslow Square, WC1.
February 26.

From the Reverend Toddy Hoare

Sir, I am grateful for your report about my sculpture of Mary Magdalene as the first apostle, but would like to correct one or two inaccuracies.

The pose was indeed based on a Medigiani drawing, but the model is not a Knynton parishioner: she is an

art-school model living at the other end of the county. In any case, I would not like the press to raise the expectations of some, or horror in others, that I am only interested in parishioners taking their clothes off.

The panel on which this sculpture is modelled is not concrete but is *ciment fondu* — ie, cast in a plaster mould taken from a modelled clay original. And the studio I use does not adjoin the vicarage but is in another village.

Yours faithfully,
TODDY HOARE,
Leake Vicarage, Knynton,
Thirsk, North Yorkshire.
March 5.

From the Reverend Professor Emeritus P. Thieme

Sir, There is no need to call for the canonisation of Mary Magdalene. She has been a saint for many centuries: feast day, July 22 — see the calendar of the *Missale Romanum*, the Book of Common Prayer 1662 and 1928 (with proper Collect, Epistle and Gospel), and even the Alternative Service Book.

Not being one of the 12 chosen by our Lord, Mary Magdalene cannot be an apostle. But she is the first witness of the Resurrection and venerated as such.

Yours faithfully,
P. H. THIEME,
Haagweg 174, 2282 AJ,
Rijswijk ZH, The Netherlands.
February 25.

Dowding medals

From Mrs Rosanne Anggard

Sir, My sympathies go to the Dowding family regarding their recent differences over the disposal of Lord Dowding's medals, now resolved with their sale to the RAF Museum (report, March 4, see also letter March 3).

I am the eldest grandchild of Field Marshal Sir John Dill and our family inherited his medals and his baton. The medals are kept in a safe place and are therefore never on view. Approximately seven years ago we gave the baton to the Imperial War Museum on loan since it had become increasingly expensive to insure.

When I went to see the baton last year, I was very disappointed to find it displayed in a large cabinet with a mass of trivia such as washing and shaving kits.

Channel 5 retuning

From the Chief Executive of Channel 5

Sir, The notion that "two million householders face charges of up to £100 to have their television sets retuned" (report, February 24) is fantasy. By the time three months have passed from Channel 5's launch nobody at all suffering interference to videos or other relevant equipment as a result of Channel 5 transmissions should have to spend anything on retuning.

Since the Churchill family has raised a considerable sum on the Churchill papers, we are perhaps entitled to ask why others can't realise some money by selling papers and medals. However, in honour of our nation's "grandfathers", I think we would be much happier to see the items well displayed in a suitable place for considerably less financial reward. But where is that place?

Until there is some visionary thought given to a permanent national World War II display of these and other items, controversy over the sale of medals and memorabilia will continue. It is very hard for those who inherit such items to know what to do for the best.

Yours etc,
ROSANNE ANGGARD,
97 Kyrle Road, SW11.
March 4.

It is a statutory duty of Channel 5's to cure such problems within 14 days of notification. In the three months from launch, and in the month of pre-launch test transmissions, virtually everyone likely to suffer interference will have found out about it.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID ELSTEIN, Chief Executive,
Channel 5 Broadcasting Limited,
22 Long Acre, WC2.
February 24.

Business letters, page 29

OBITUARIES

Cheddi Jagan, President of Guyana since 1992, died yesterday at Walter Reed Army Medical Centre, Washington, aged 78. He was born on March 22, 1918.

It is ironic that Cheddi Jagan spent his last days being cared for in a US military hospital, after having been for so long a dogged opponent of US policies and a committed supporter of the Soviet Union. Washington, through its powers in diplomacy and the CIA and its associated arms, did everything possible to ensure that he never came to power during the Cold War period.

Jagan was the figure in the political life of British Guiana who gained most international notice during the last tumultuous decade of that territory's life as a colony.

Handsome, and with immense charm, he had some of the qualities of a demagogue, but one without sure political instincts. He was a Communist who followed the Moscow line, but he lacked the ruthlessness and discipline of the true Marxist revolutionary. He was confused about means, a dismal tactician, and he was outmanoeuvred by his opponents at home and abroad.

Descended from indentured Indian labourers, and one of 11 children, Cheddi Bharat Jagan was born on a sugar plantation in the Corentyne. He was educated at Queen's College, Georgetown, from where he went on to study dentistry in the United States. There he met and married, in 1943, his wife Janet Rosenberg, later establishing himself in dental practice in Georgetown, with her as his nurse.

The couple formed political discussion groups and published tracts. Jagan was elected to British Guiana's Legislative Council in 1947, representing the East Demerara sugar workers. In 1950 the People's Progressive Party (PPP) was founded, joining the two main racial

groups in the colony in political union, with Jagan as leader, his wife as general secretary, and a black barrister, Linden Forbes Burnham, as chairman. In 1963, in the first election with universal suffrage, they won overwhelmingly.

In office, the party made clear its intended lack of respect for the colonial constitution. Jagan was Minister of Agriculture, Labour and Mines: the PPP, through the union it controlled, called a general strike in the sugar industry. After 133 days the Governor suspended the constitution, considering the Government pro-Communist. Jagan rushed to London to rally support: after he returned, he and his wife were detained for six months.

Always ambitious, Burnham tried to seize control of the PPP in early 1965, but was blocked by the Jaganites: two rival PPPs came into existence, divided by race. The constitution was restored in 1967, and in the election which followed, Jagan's supporters, using the Hindi slogan "Apan Jaat" (Vote your Own), won nearly two thirds of the seats. A successful period in office followed, with the emphasis on development and on new schools and roads. Following the election of 1961, under a more advanced constitution, Jagan became "BG's" first Premier, and he planned independence for 1962.

But in that year Georgetown's black population rose up in protest against an austerity budget. Jagan was humiliated, having to call in the British troops. Deep communal suspicion and violence now separated what had been a harmonious multiracial society. Many non-Hindu Guyanese, especially professionals, emigrated. Jagan stubbornly tried to impose his will on the black trade unions, who responded with a general strike of 79 days, and they won.

In their struggle, the trade unions, especially the civil servants, were largely sustained by funding later revealed as coming from US intelligence sources, now deeply concerned over Jagan's Soviet

CHEDDI JAGAN



links. As President Kennedy made clear to Harold Macmillan, who promised Britain's co-operation.

At the London Constitutional Conference in 1963, with Guyanese parties deadlocked, the Colonial Secretary, Duncan Sandys, prevailed upon them to sign an agreement giving him *carte blanche* to propose his own solution. Astonishingly, Jagan agreed: it was Burnham who was

of Burnham's People's National Congress and a small pro-capitalist party.

Independence came in 1966. Burnham consolidated his power. Jagan's response was confused, as he was outwitted by the ruthless and opportunistic Burnham, who declared Guyana a co-operative and socialist republic and nationalised all major industries, outflanking Jagan by developing warm relations with Cuba and the Soviet Union.

Jagan's rigidity made co-operation with other opposition elements impossible, and direct challenges such as the strike of the East Indian sugar workers were broken. Some leading PPP figures were even enticed away by ministerial office.

In common with many impartial observers, Jagan denounced the fraudulent character of subsequent Guyanese elections. But he continued to participate in them, as an exercise in party and above all ethnic solidarity.

He spent the 1980s campaigning for free elections. Burnham died in August 1985, being succeeded as President by Desmond Hoyte, who inherited an economy laid waste by nearly 20 years of political nepotism and incompetence. Formerly prosperous Guyanese had sunk to the level of Haiti in their per capita earnings, vying for the lowest place in the Americas. The IMF, USAID and the Caribbean Development Bank refused all further aid and credit.

Hoyte, essentially a pragmatist very far from Burnham's egoism, was forced to seek help from outside. The price was an undertaking that free and fair elections would eventually come. A rapprochement with the US Administration followed, and the IMF became friendlier. There was massive devaluation, and a privatisation programme was announced.

As part of the growing understanding between Washington and Moscow, the Soviet Union now ceased to sustain its supporters among Caribbean leftists, apart from Cuba: the prospect of Jagan's

coming to power thus became less of a worry to the Americans. As the Soviet empire and then the USSR itself disintegrated, it was possible to view this still committed Marxist with equanimity.

In October 1992, watched by observers from the Commonwealth and the Carter Centre, Jagan was elected President at the age of 74, having stood on a broad ticket combining the PPP with a number of publicly concerned individuals and small organisations.

In his four years in office Jagan allowed the privatisation policy begun by Hoyte to continue, though at a slow and deliberate pace. He was suspicious of any forced sale of the family silver, remarking that he had not been elected to preside over the liquidation of Guyana.

The foreign debt position improved: several major creditors, including Britain, helped by writing off large amounts. GDP, from its very low base, began to climb. Goldmining saw a spectacular increase. Rice and sugar production rose.

Constrained by the IMF restructuring programme, the collapse of world communism and Guyana's perilous economic situation, Jagan appeared a moderate in office — though he made clear that his Marxist views remained unrepentant.

But, though many Guyanese of all shades respected him, they often thought differently of his ministers and officials. There has been little progress in the task of building racial unity.

Under the constitution, he is succeeded now as President by the Prime Minister, Samuel Hinds, the black former chairman of Guyana's Action for Reform and Democracy (Guard). But his death leaves Guyana facing a period of great political uncertainty, until and beyond the general election scheduled for this October. He leaves no designated successor in the PPP.

Jagan is survived by his wife and by a son, who has said he would be available for selection to succeed his father, and a daughter.

WILLIAM TATTON BROWN

William Tatton Brown, CB, architect, died on February 2 aged 86. He was born on October 13, 1910.

IN A wide-ranging architectural career, William Tatton Brown helped to design some of the most outstanding state schools of the immediate post-war period, ran a Ministry of Health department and enjoyed the pleasure of private practice. He worked first with the pioneering Berthold Lubetkin, who helped to introduce modern architecture to Britain in the 1930s, before moving on to work with Hertfordshire County Council in the 1940s and 1950s.

He was in charge of the Ministry of Health's hospital building programme in the 1960s, but also, during much of his career, worked in partnership with his wife Aileen on domestic projects.

William Eden Tatton Brown was born in Lewes, spent his early years in Egypt where his father was head of Egyptian Customs, returned to England after the First World War and went to school in Rottingdean. From there he went to Wellington College and, in 1928, was at the Architectural Association School for a year, going on to King's College, Cambridge, to read history and architecture.

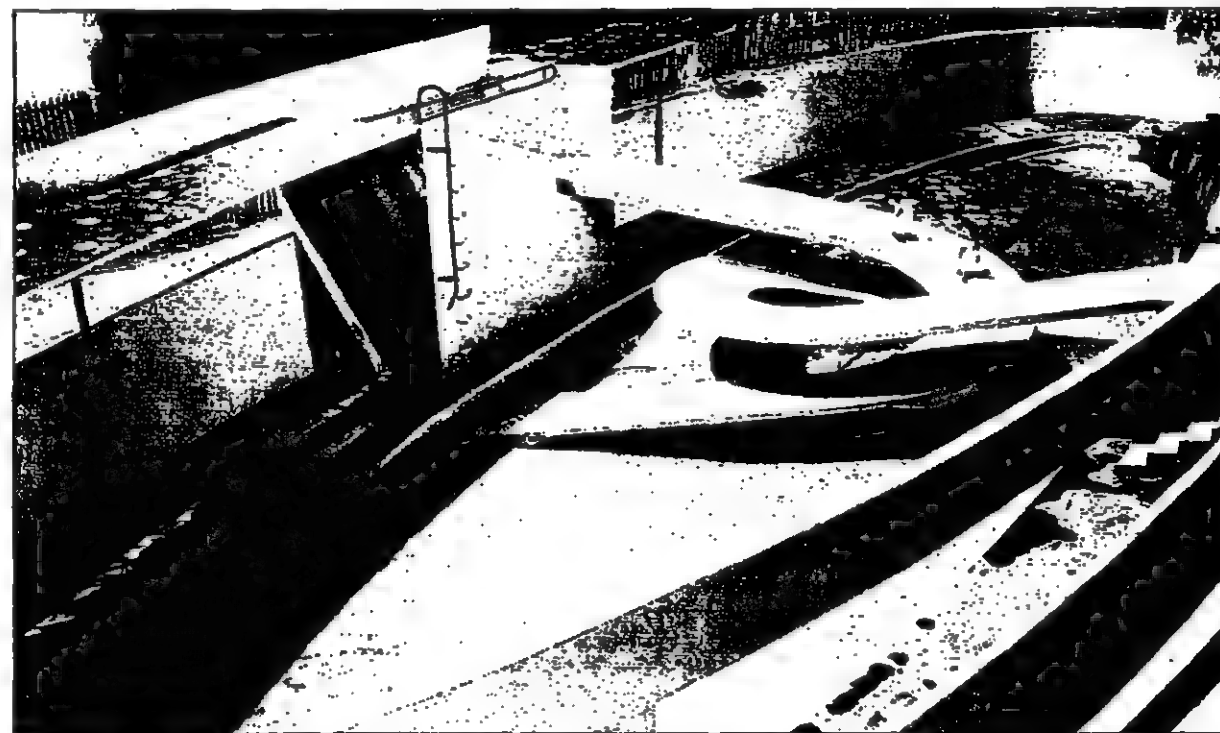
In 1932 he went to France, tried without success to work for Le Corbusier, put a job with Andre Lurcat, another



fine architect, and, back in London, in 1933 completed his training in the AA School's 5th year. It was then, in 1934, that he joined the up-and-coming firm of Tecton, run by Lubetkin.

For a young architect, interested above all in design, his time with Lubetkin proved remarkable. He worked on the Penguin Pool at London Zoo and the pair of great apartment blocks, Highpoint I and II, in North Hill, Highgate. While the Penguin Pool, a breakthrough in terms of an architectural conception, fired him with enthusiasm, the Highpoint blocks were of particular importance to Tatton Brown.

He was the chief assistant for these, and what he learnt from their highly sophisticated structures, planning and details persisted as an influ-



The Penguin Pool at London Zoo, on which William Tatton Brown worked as Berthold Lubetkin's assistant

ence throughout his life. As a continuation of his training, the experience could not be bettered.

With this background, he became deeply involved with the Modern Architectural Research Group, in 1938 he left Tecton to set up in practice with Lionel Bren.

This did not last long. With the outbreak of war, he worked

first on the design of air raid shelters, then joined the Royal Engineers and, before going out to Burma, published a piece on the replanning of part of bombed London in the *Architectural Review* in collaboration with his wife, a former assistant of Lubetkin's, whom he married in 1936.

On demobilisation in 1945, a government grant paid for a town-planning course that

brought him the job of assistant regional planning officer at the Ministry of Town and Country Planning.

The ministry did not come up to expectations and Tatton Brown left in 1948 to become deputy county architect for Hertfordshire and preside over a group of exceptionally talented and educationally oriented architects — David Medd, Mary Crowley, Anthony Porter, Stirratt Johnson-Marshall and Oliver Cox — who led the way in meeting the requirements of R. A. Butler's 1944 Education Act.

This called for a massive school building programme which was exceedingly difficult to fulfil on account of extreme shortages of materials. It was a problem which forced out prefabrication, the lightweight structures, panels and tubular steel trusses which Tatton Brown's group transformed into an aesthetic of unique quality.

This form of construction, developed from experimental work in prefabrication for military use in the war and never before employed in the educational field, was excellent so long as it was limited to the problem it was designed to

solve. It was only when its use spread more widely — to university buildings and housing, for instance — that it came to seem disastrous.

While Tatton Brown was in Hertfordshire, the family moved to a farmhouse with 70 acres near Berkhamsted which they farmed. He and his wife, who had already made extensive conversion to a house they owned in Kensington, made various alterations to their farmhouse and, in 1965, also built a house in Spain. Meanwhile he had, for reasons of economy and efficiency, brought his experience of industrial techniques in school buildings, and his knowledge of systems in America and Scandinavia, to bear on large-scale hospital design.

He was appointed a Companion of the Bath in 1965 and, although retiring in 1971, continued to work as a consultant to the ministry and to lecture at hospital conferences throughout the world. He built a second house in Spain, and wrote (with Paul James) *Hospitals: Design and Development*.

He is survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter.

ROBERT YOUNG

Robert Young, orthopaedic surgeon, died on February 8 aged 93. He was born on October 6, 1903.

ONE of the most distinguished orthopaedic surgeons of the post-war era, Bob Young made his greatest contribution in the development of the surgical treatment of lumbar disc lesions, and also conditions of the knee joint before the days of arthroscopy.

Robert Henry Young was educated at Sherborne, Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and St Thomas' Hospital, qualifying MRCS LRCP in 1929. He obtained the degree of BCh (Cantab) in 1934 and FRCS (Eng) in 1936.

He worked as orthopaedic house surgeon and registrar at St Thomas', and as chief assistant to the orthopaedic department under Rowley Bristow. He was in charge of the physiotherapy department, where his association with James Cyriax developed his interest in conditions of the lumbar spine.

With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, he was appointed orthopaedic surgeon to Botley's Park War Hospital at Chertsey, Surrey, which became a sector hospital of St Thomas', as part of the Emergency Medical Service.

There he worked with B. H. Burns, who was orthopaedic surgeon at St George's Hospital, Hyde Park Corner. Together they pioneered the surgical treatment of lumbar disc lesions. They established a safe and reliable technique of laminectomy — surgical incision into the backbone — for removal of the protruded or damaged lumbar disc. In the days before scans or adequate radiological investigation, they stressed the importance of exploration of more than one level in the lumbar spine.

The hospital at Chertsey was one of the first receiving hospitals for casualties after Dunkirk and D-Day, and offered great opportunities for the development of internal fixation of fractures for the purpose of early mobilisation.

After the war, Young was appointed orthopaedic surgeon to St George's Hospital, where he worked from 1946 to

1968, at the same time continuing at Chertsey where St Peter's Hospital was redeveloped on the old site at Botley's Park. He also started the department at the new St George's Hospital at Tooting in 1956.

Young was an outstanding surgeon and a good teacher both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He was particularly patient and painstaking in the instruction of his juniors in the operating theatres.

He had a great interest in scientific matters both inside and outside medicine, and developed considerable expertise in the "mathematics of chance". He was very fond of



music, loved the ballet and was himself a talented pianist. He also enjoyed flying.

Shortly after his retirement from the NHS he moved to Malm, where he continued work with the Armed Forces stationed there until the bases were closed down, when he returned to London and resumed private practice until the early 1980s.

He finally retired to his farm in Somerset where, with typical energy, he set out to grow asparagus, develop a small lake for fishing, and start the distribution of beer from the family brewery in Wardsworth to the hostellers round Yeovil and the Navy mess at the Fleet Air Arm base at Yeovilton.

In 1929 he married Nancy Wilcox. The marriage was dissolved. He married his second wife, Norma Williams, in 1961. He is survived by her and by their two sons.

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FRIDAY MARCH 7 1997

Treasury attacked over power shares sale decision

By Robert Miller

TREASURY officials were criticised by a Commons committee yesterday for failing to alert ministers to price-sensitive information in the run-up to the sale of a second tranche of shares in the electricity generating companies.

The sale of National Power and PowerGen shares last year attracted more than one million private

investors and raised almost £4 billion for the Treasury's coffers.

A report by the Committee of Public Accounts (PAC), headed by Robert Sheldon, said it shared "the Treasury's regret that ministers were not consulted before the final decision was taken by Treasury officials to proceed with the sale".

Officials exposed ministers to criticism after they failed to inform them of an impending price review

by Stephen Littlechild, the electricity industry watchdog. On March 7 last year, the day after stock market trading began in the partly-paid shares of the two generators, Professor Littlechild duly announced that he intended to look again at the distribution price caps on the regional electricity companies.

After the electricity watchdog's announcement the share prices of National Power and PowerGen fell

sharply to well below the flotation prices fixed the previous week. Ministers immediately faced charges of misleading investors. The MPs noted in their 22-page report "the view of the Treasury and their financial advisers that an announcement would not have had a significant impact on the generating companies' share prices".

At the time of the sell-off, however, Jack Cunningham, the Shadow

Trade and Industry spokesman, called on the Serious Fraud Office to launch an official investigation into the sell-off. He alleged that the Government had been in possession of price-sensitive information that would have had an adverse effect on the eventual outcome of the sale.

George Staple, director of the SFO, then sought advice from a senior Queen's Counsel as to whether there was enough evidence to

suspect "the commission of an offence involving serious or complex fraud in connection with the shares' sale". The SFO decided not to launch an investigation.

In yesterday's report the MPs endorsed "the agreement between the Treasury and regulators that, in future, the regulators will avoid making any announcements during a share sale and for a suitable period thereafter".

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES

FTSE 100	4399.3	(+39.2)
FTSE All share	2145.25	(+16.93)
Nikkei	18041.33	(+232.16)
Dow Jones	8888.87	(+35.09)
S&P Composite	802.65	(+0.68)

US RATE		
Federal Funds	5 1/8%	(5 1/8%)
Long Bond	5 7/8%	(5 7/8%)
Yield	6.95%	(6.95%)

LONDON MONEY		
3-month interbank	6 1/4%	(6 1/4%)
Life long gilt	11 1/4%	(11 1/4%)
Future (May)	11 1/4%	(11 1/4%)

STERLING

New York	1.6132	(1.6138)
London	1.6121	(1.6098)
DM	2.7704	(2.7549)
FF	2.3431	(2.3335)
Sfr	2.4002	(2.3935)
Yen	195.00	(195.42)
£ index	98.4	(98.1)

US \$ & DOLLAR

London	1.7169	(1.7130)
DM	2.7870	(2.7800)
Sfr	1.4669	(1.4625)
Yen	121.20	(121.29)
£ index	104.3	(104.1)

TOKYO CLOSE YEN 121.00

NORTH SEA OIL

Brent 15-day (May)	\$18.80	(\$18.10)
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COMMODITIES

London close	\$382.25	(\$382.00)
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* denotes midday trading price

Penalties to enforce 48-hour working

By Philip Bassett, Industrial Editor

THE Government, having lost a bitter battle against the European Union's 48-hour working week directive, plans severe sanctions, including financial penalties, against companies who breach the new law.

Engineering companies that are likely to be most affected claim that the proposed sanctions go well beyond those specified by Brussels.

Industry leaders said that having opposed the EU's 48-hour working time directive, the Government is now proposing penalties for failure to comply, which is not required under the directive.

Last year the Government failed to get the European Court to block the EU's directive, which sets maximum weekly hours as well as laying down specific legal requirements on holidays, shift and other patterns of work. Ministers and business insist the directive will push up costs, lead to job losses and reduce competitiveness.

But following the court's decision, the Government is now consulting on how to implement it. In little-noticed proposals, the Government is suggesting that companies that dismiss or take action against employees who assert rights under the directive to work for not more than 48 hours per week may be liable to pay compensation, either in general terms in relation to the nature of the company's offence, or to any directly attributable loss suffered by the employee.

Engineering companies told the Department of Trade and Industry yesterday that "the

proposal to grant compensation for the infringement of the right is unnecessary and would introduce a penal element into civil remedies that is unjust".

Leaders of the EEF engineering employers said they were surprised that having opposed the directive so strongly, the Government was now proposing to enforce it in ways that the directive did not require. The directive says only that its provisions must be effectively enforced but does not specify how.

The EEF urged that the Government should set a limit of £11,300 to compensation awarded by an industrial tribunal for attributable loss, in line with current limits for dismissal on other grounds, and said that under the terms of the Government's proposals, employees could be awarded more if they were not dismissed than if they were.

The EEF also urged the Government to implement the terms of the directive as flexibly as possible. David Yeandle, head of employment affairs, said it was vital that companies were given as much flexibility as possible because the directive would impose extra burdens and costs without any discernible benefit to the industry.

The DTI said that the Government would now be studying the responses to the consultation before deciding its next move. No announcement is expected before the general election and any legislative move to implement the directive is unlikely before the end of the year.

Joining single currency 'good for homeowners'

HOMEBOWNERS would benefit greatly from low and stable interest rates if Britain joined a single European currency, the Council of Mortgage Lenders said yesterday (Gavin Lumsden writes).

Publishing a report on a single currency's impact on the UK mortgage market, the CML said that monetary union could hurt borrowers if it caused rates to rise, but added that the opposite outcome was more likely.

However, the report's authors, Duncan MacLennan and Mark Stephens, of the University of Glasgow, said that monetary union would

force north European countries, including the UK, to reform social housing and increase private renting in order to increase the mobility of their workforces.

Consistently low interest rates would also make it cheaper for lenders to supply fixed-rate mortgages, the report said. According to CML figures, four in five borrowers choose variable-rate mortgages. However, Mr Stephens said that borrowers were unlikely to see the attraction of fixing rates in a low-rate environment.

Pennington, page 27



Positive comments from Sir Richard Sykes on long-term prospects helped the shares

Cheer on rates lifts markets

By Janet Bush

SHARES jumped to a record high in London for the third successive day. Investors were cheered by a solid performance on Wall Street and a feeling that UK interest rates will be left on hold for now. The FT-SE 100 index closed 39.2 points higher, at 4,399.3.

The mood in stock markets across Europe was buoyant after Wednesday's suggestion from Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the US Federal Reserve, that he would not push for a rise in US interest rates to deflate share values.

In London, Wednesday's monetary meeting brought cheer, with base rates unchanged. Yesterday's statement from the Confederation of British Industry that rates could be left on hold for the first half of 1997, The CBI's latest distributive trades survey yesterday showed a slowing in retail sales growth in February.

Sterling ended at 98.4 on its effective index. Chancellor's cheer, page 26 Markets, page 28

British Gas hit by defections

By Graham Seanjeant

ONE in eight gas customers in Kent and Sussex has contracted to switch supplier before competition officially starts today, the biggest dent yet in the former British Gas monopoly.

TransCo, the BCI company that runs gas pipelines, said that 112,375 out of about 900,000 customers in the latest pilot area for competition have asked to desert Centrica, the new British Gas company.

The vast majority of defections have been signed by suppliers linked in the local water and electricity monopolies, ScottishPower, which owns Southern Water, claims more than 50,000 converts, 5.0 per cent of the market. Beacon Gas, a joint venture between Seaboard and Amoco, claims 40,000 or 4.4 per cent.

A further 11 competitors have only 2.2 per cent between them so far. This again suggests that Centrica will be faced with a series of local challenges rather than national competitors. Competition is accelerating in Dorset and Avon, where the market was opened a month ago. During the past two weeks, the number of customers switching has doubled to 31,000, or 0.2 per cent of the market. In the South West, where competition has been running almost a year, Centrica has lost about 19 per cent of its 500,000 customer base.

Ofgas, the industry's regulator, is to consult competitors and others over an offer by Centrica to incur debit customers in the South West of an extra 10 per cent discount. This is double the direct debit discount available on its national tariff, but still leaves British Gas as a relatively expensive competitor. Rivals say British Gas should not be allowed to cut prices.

Centrica may only offer differential prices if competition has been established in an area. Clare Spottiswoode, Director-General of Gas Supply, said: "This is a clear signal that competition and choice is what people want." The Gas Consumers Council said it was pleased that almost 250,000 customers had now deserted British Gas.

Glaxo growth will stall as Zantac fades

By Eric Reguly

GLAXO WELLCOME issued a warning yesterday that earnings growth will stall over the next two years as sales of Zantac, its best-selling ulcer treatment, plummet in the face of generic competition.

Zantac, once the world's best-selling drug, loses US patent protection in July and Sir Richard Sykes, chief executive, predicted that its sales could fall by as much as 80 per cent. Zantac's US sales last year declined 14 per cent to £1 billion, equivalent to 54 per cent of global Zantac sales and 23 per cent of Glaxo's overall revenue.

But Sir Richard predicted that Glaxo will return to double-digit growth by 1999, when new product sales gain momentum. "This year and next will not be spectacular in terms of growth," he said. "Beyond that, we are looking for significant growth in sales."

His positive comments on the company's long-term outlook helped to lift the shares by 6p, to £10.49, in a rising market.

Shares in Glaxo had been on the wane in recent days on the back of fears that the strength of sterling and the dollar against European currencies will put pressure on earnings. It appears that many investors switched their holdings to SmithKline Bee-

cham, whose shares closed up 23p, at 942½, just short of their high for the year.

Glaxo is counting on its new products. Last year, products launched in the past five years rose 50 per cent to £2 billion, equivalent to 24 per cent group sales.

Respiratory drugs, notably Serevent and Fibroxide, were among the star performers in the new drugs category. Sales of the respiratory portfolio rose 11 per cent, to £1.76 billion, last year. Viral drugs such as Retrovir and Epirvir, the anti-HIV treatments, were also strong.

Last year also marked the first full year of contributions from Wellcome, acquired for £9 billion in 1995.

The company reported 1996 pre-tax record profits of £2.96 billion, up 18 per cent on sales of £8.34 billion, up 6 per cent. Sales excluding Zantac were up 14 per cent. Earnings per share were 56.7p, against 50.3p.

Debt fell £1.2 billion to £3.2 billion, putting the company in better position to fund another large acquisition. But Sir Richard said that Glaxo was more likely to grow organically. A final dividend of 19p, to be paid on May 20, lifts the total dividend 13 per cent to 34p.

Tempus, page 28

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Name on Card _____ Daytime phone No _____
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John Lewis staff to share £82m bonus

By Clare Stewart

STAFF of the John Lewis Partnership are to share a bonus of £82 million after the Waitrose supermarket and department store group rang up record profits in 1996.

Its 36,000 employees, known as partners, will each receive a 20 per cent bonus payment equivalent to about 10 weeks' pay. About 83 per cent of each bonus will be tax-free. The bonus

payments were fuelled by a 45 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £217 million in the year to January 25, with sales rising 12 per cent to £3.2 billion.

Stuart Hampson, chairman, said: "We are extremely pleased and it is a tremendous result. It owes much to the fact that both divisions are progressing well at the same time."

He acknowledged the assistance of "a better following breeze from economic conditions", but added that the

record results did not equate to a consumer boom, with customers continuing to spend cautiously "and with an eye for value".

The 23 department stores increased sales 13 per cent to £1.57 billion. Sales at Waitrose rose 11 per cent to £1.53 billion in a competitive market and flat prices. In spite of being "hit by riotousness from the crossfire," between the market's most aggressive players, Waitrose had no plans to change tack, said Mr

Hampson. "We will concentrate on what we do best - fine food and service." He added that there were no plans to follow other supermarkets in offering banking services.

Sales in the first five weeks of the current financial year rose 6.8 per cent overall, with department stores leading the way with a rise of 9.2 per cent. With virtually no inflation in food prices currently, Waitrose sales showed slower growth, rising 5.2 per cent.

□ Housing market defies rules of economics □ BTR share price may be on the turn □ Unnecessary deluge of trading news

Estate agents cry 'full house'

□ THIS is a very funny housing market, and one that seems to defy all the normal rules of economics. But what it is not is a booming housing market.

Price rises are relatively modest. Earlier this week the Halifax actually scaled back its annualised figure for house price inflation for the second month in a row, down to 6.8 per cent for the year to February compared with 8.4 per cent in 1996.

The number of housing transactions is running below any year in the 1980s. Last year there were 1.24 million; the Council of Mortgage Lenders expects 1.35 million this year and a further 100,000 more in 1997. In 1988 2.15 million people moved home.

Yesterday Black Horse Agencies, owned by Lloyds TSB, put out a report that was half a rallying cry to new customers and half a profits warning. There is a desperate shortage of homes for sale. Nationally, there are nine months' supply of homes for sale. Negative equity is disappearing, especially in the South East. Never been a better time to buy... oh, you can guess the rest.

In economics, supply follows demand. In commodity markets, a shortage prompts producers to build more plant. As they act in an unco-ordinated way, there is soon a glut of plastics or what-

ever, and producers start to close their older, less profitable plant. This causes a shortage again. Houses should be the same, builders stimulated into action by rising prices.

There are two special factors. One is planning law, preventing houses being built where most people want to live, the leafy suburbs or the green belt. The second is rising demographic demand, the much-quoted government figure of 4.4 million more homes needed over the next two decades.

Given these, the normal economic model would have house prices spiralling until enough potential customers are priced out of the market. But this is not happening: the advent of the spring selling season has seen starting price rises in some areas, especially those affected by City bonuses and demand from overseas, but these are not necessarily going to continue.

What is holding prices back is shortage of lending finance. Banks and building societies have learnt their lesson: no 100 per cent loans this time, no silly multiples on salaries. People

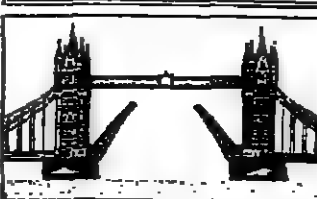
cannot chase prices higher forever. But they are unwilling to downgrade their expectations, so many are losing out. Buying a home is not becoming much more expensive, but it is getting ever more difficult.

Eventually, prices will have to rise. Given low wage price inflation, the only way this can happen is for lenders to accept that low inflation and interest rates mean they can risk making higher advances to their customers, the logical extension of the CML's musings on the euro yesterday. But the line between this and a runaway housing market is a fine one.

Strachan delivers the goods

□ IAN STRACHAN at BTR must be wondering what he has to do to pull the shares out of the miserable trough they have occupied since June. Mind you, if he has doubts, his positive demeanour yesterday was giving no hint of it. But even the merest whisper of a share buyback does sound like desperation.

PENNINGTON



Even after yesterday's rise, BTR shares are just 30p above their low for the past year. Catching BTR on the turn has been a perilous task, but there are at last signs that the bottom may have been reached. Unpopularity has been as much to do with its status as an unfashionable conglomerate as with any innate faults, but that status has simply given the market no reason to invest.

Instead, Mr Strachan has ploughed ahead on delivering the promises on restructuring he made a year ago. The disposal programme is 75 per cent over, and the group is well on target for 15 per cent of sales in emerging markets by the year 2000. But most interesting for

now, and particularly piquant on the day that BTR announced the departure of Alan Jackson, one of the architects of its former policy of growth by pumping out new equity, is Mr Strachan's views on future capital needs.

BTR was one of the market's heaviest warrants addicts. This form of share issue, promising shareholders new equity in future at a price higher than the current one, relies on a share price that can be expected to rise without interruption, which is why it has fallen out of favour in these topsy markets. Mr Strachan has not only said that there will be no more such issues, he is putting in place the ability to buy the outstanding two tranches, pretty well worthless at 19p and 4p, or some of the ordinary share capital.

So BTR will operate within its existing finances, funding acquisitions out of normal cash-flow and the proceeds of disposals. Interest cover was a respectable seven times last year so the company should not be stretched, but it all smacks of caution, which the market likes from the new BTR. Mr Strachan

now needs to deliver the sustainable profit growth he has promised. This could be the year the shares come back in favour.

Make it a day to remember

□ PUBLIC companies with combined market capitalisations of more than £70 billion chose yesterday to present their latest financial statements — and that is disregarding John Lewis, a business of more than passing interest to retail analysts. This is equal to 7 per cent of the total value of the London stock market. There were ten companies alone with market values of more than £1 billion.

Next Thursday will be the same. They seem to like Thursdays — the best explanation is that it allows time for all the executives to jet in from around the world without spoiling the weekends and then to hold a formal board meeting. Wednesday is almost as good a bet. Friday is almost universally shunned, and Monday is unpopular. The result is that on

certain days every spring and autumn, and there are only about a dozen during each reporting season, the stock market is deluged with trading statements. There are attempts to ensure the main players in a given sector do not report on the same day to prevent analysts becoming overloaded, but this does not always work. Yesterday saw figures from BTR and Cookson Group. This year has been made worse than most by the early arrival of Easter.

Banks and oil companies manage to report within two months of the end of the trading period. Manufacturers take longer, for some reason, and they insist on monopolising one or two days a week. They then whinge pitifully about how nobody pays them enough attention. The solution is in their hands.

A spin-doctor writes

□ PICTURE the scene at last week's Cabinet meeting, "Pensions," says someone. "Re-arrange the pension system. At least it shows we're doing something different. Yours, I think, Peter." "But the last time the pension companies went on the rampage there was no end of trouble. City regulation's yours, Ken." "True. Tell you what. We'll hand out a kicking at the same time. I'll get Ange on to it pronto."

Ladbroke keeps an eye on casino bid battle

BY ALAN MURRAY

LADBROKE, the hotel and gaming company, admitted yesterday that it was watching the £180 million bid battle between London Clubs International and Capital Corporation "closely".

Ladbroke, which has been linked with a potential takeover offer for the two London casino operators, made it clear that it already had access to bank funds if it decided to launch a bid.

A return to form in the betting division helped Ladbroke to lift full-year profits to £163 million before tax and exceptional items.

Profits in the betting and gaming division rose 46 per cent to £85 million. Ladbroke said that new products, such as Lucky Choice and Forty Nines, had helped the retail betting operations to fight back against the National Lottery.

Vernons, the pools business, also improved profits although turn-

Tempus

over dropped a further 30 per cent. But casino profits fell back because of losses at Maxims.

Hilton International increased profits 7 per cent to £160 million by a strong UK market. In London, occupancy rates reached 85 per cent while worldwide occupancy rose from 69 per cent to 69.6 per cent.

Ladbroke said that it had agreements in place to develop 30 new hotels over the next four years, improving the brand's global spread. The company added that it expected to benefit if Hilton Hotels Corporation won control of ITT although no resolution of the \$10 billion bid battle is expected until later this year.

Exceptional items totalled £104 million, including costs to cover the closure of the property division and the resolution of legal battles over the Paris Hilton and the sale of Texas Homecare.

The total dividend was increased 3 per cent to 6.2p. A final dividend of 3.8p is payable on June 2.

Merger costs take their toll of Royal & SunAlliance

BY MARIANNE CURRIEY INSURANCE CORRESPONDENT

INTEGRATION costs, exchange rate movements and provisions against environmental claims have taken their toll on profits at the newly merged Royal & SunAlliance. Even the promise of a share buy-back was not enough to stop the shares slipping yesterday, after the company reported a fall in pre-tax profit to £648 million from £1 billion in the previous year.

The first annual results of the combined composite insurer showed that last year's £6 billion merger of Royal Insurance and SunAlliance has so far cost £201 million, £26 million more than the £175 million management predicted could be saved annually. A total of 5,000 jobs are expected to go.

The insurer plans to return up to 5 per cent of its capital to shareholders and will seek permission to do so at May's AGM. However, analysts expressed disappointment at a lower than expected total dividend and the high restructuring costs.

Shares fell 17p to 486p, after an initial jump to 515p on news of the buy-back. Operating profit fell from £915 million in 1995 to £706 million last year. This figure includes £117 million worth of provision against future asbestos and environmental claims in the United States, and £50 million to strengthen claims reserves in the UK. It also includes the effect of exchange rate movements, which cost £32 million over the year. It does not include integration costs of £201 million or a claims equalisation provision of £90 million.



Roger Taylor, left, with Richard Gamble, group chief executive of Royal & SunAlliance, yesterday

RSA is among a number of insurance companies currently reassessing their possible future liability in the US for business written in the 1960s and 1970s. Eagle Star, the BAT Industries subsidiary, has set aside a £160 million provision. Roger Taylor, RSA deputy chairman, announced Pat-

rick Gillam, chairman of Standard Chartered, is to become non-executive chairman. He said the share buyback left the way open for more acquisitions, but declined to comment on whether RSA was seeking a UK life insurer.

Profits for the general insurance business after the

changes in claims reserving were £480 million, down from £754 million. Improvements in Canada and Scandinavia were offset by reduced profits elsewhere.

Mr Taylor described weather losses in the US as "exceptional" at £96 million, £36 million higher than in

1995. Life profits increased 15 per cent to £213 million.

The total dividend was raised to 19p per share, in line with management's forecast.

RSA believes personal motor insurance rates will rise this year and said it achieved increases of 8 per cent across the board in 1996.

Hillsdown meets expectations

BY CLARE STEWART

HILLSDOWN HOLDINGS, the food manufacturer whose brands range from Typhoo Tea to Buxted chickens, reported results at the top end of City expectations, with pre-tax profits of £128.8 million for the year to December 31.

This compares to the previous year's result when a heavy write-off after the sale of its stake in Maple Leaf Foods of Canada produced a £12 million loss.

Hillsdown also said it is hopeful of soon recovering £7.4 million of tax paid in 1989 on money received from the pension fund of a subsidiary. Hillsdown, which was subsequently forced by the Pensions Ombudsman to repay the pension fund, is planning to



George Greener noted improved consumer confidence

serve its outstanding writ against the Inland Revenue to recover the tax paid and interest accrued.

George Greener, who took over as Hillsdown chief execu-

tive during the year, struck a confident tone commenting on the results, noting the better business climate and improvement in consumer confidence. Excluding the benefits of

acquisitions, group sales grew 7 per cent overall with operating profits ahead 11.5 per cent. The poultry businesses flourished, helped by increased demand from consumers worried about BSE and red meat. Operating profits rose 18 per cent to £30.1 million.

The recovery in the housing market in the South East lifted results and operating margins at Fairview New Homes where, together with the furniture division, operating profits increased 30 per cent to £40.8 million.

There is a final dividend of 7.8p making a total of 10p for the year, up 5.3 per cent. Analysts are looking for pre-tax profits of around £165 million for the current year. Shares in the group were unchanged at 141p.

Cookson slide hits executive bonuses

BY CARL MORTIMER

DIRECTORS of Cookson will not receive bonuses after a year in which the materials group suffered a sharp decline in profits and margins. The worldwide slowdown in circuit board manufacture, combined with a slump in demand for ceramic products in Europe, were to blame for an 8 per cent fall in pre-tax profits to £166 million.

Richard Oster, chief executive, said demand for Cookson's laminates from circuit board makers had picked up in the fourth quarter. "We expect continued improvement, with guarded optimism," he said.

Return on sales fell from 11.1

per cent to 10 per cent, mainly due to an 18 per cent fall in profits from electronic materials. Advanced refractories, which makes materials for the steel industry, achieved 5 per cent organic growth despite worldwide steel production being in decline. However, Cookson Matthey Ceramics, the joint venture with Johnson Matthey, suffered from the decline in European construction markets and profits fell 18 per cent. The total dividend is up 8 per cent at 8.6p a share, with a final 4.7p payable from pre-exceptional earnings of 17p (18.9p).

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German rates unchanged as rise in jobless slows

BY JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS EDITOR

THE Bundesbank left German interest rates unchanged yesterday, a decision which coincided with news that unemployment increased again in February.

The discount rate remains at 2.5 per cent and the Lombard emergency financing rate at 4.5 per cent. The key repurchase rate remains at 3 per cent.

The German central bank was widely expected to keep rates on hold in spite of the country's evident problems of unemployment.

The news on jobs was better than many had anticipated after January's shocking rise in seasonally adjusted unemployment of 145,000.

In February, the total rose by only 5,000, to 4.32 million, leaving the unemployment rate unchanged from the 11.3 per cent registered in January.

January's figure sparked deep concern that Germany would fail to meet the Maastricht Treaty deficit criterion and Theo Waigel, Germany's Finance Minister, gave a warning on Wednesday that the country must achieve a turnaround in its labour market performance if it is to meet the treaty requirements for joining a single currency.

Germany's VDMA association said yesterday that the

capital equipment and plant construction industry may see an improvement in employment in the second half of this year after a slight decline in staff numbers in the first half. But the Federation of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce said that the economy was stagnating in the current quarter, compared with the fourth quarter of last year and that it expected growth this year of only 2 per cent. This falls below the Government's growth target of 2.5 per cent.

Hambro back in the black

BY GEORGE SIVELL

HAMBRO Countrywide, one of Britain's largest estate agents, has returned to the black on the back of last year's surge in house prices. And the company reported that sales in January and February are up 25 per cent on the corresponding period last year.

The company also announced the acquisition of an estate agent in central London, an area that Hambro has deliberately avoided in the past. Hambro Countrywide has paid £745 million for Faron Sutaria to give it a platform on which to build in the London property market.

In the year to December 31, Faron Sutaria made a profit before proprietors' interests of £1.5 million and has made a "very encouraging" start to this year. Net assets are £983,000.

Pre-tax profits reached £30.8 million in 1996, a striking recovery from the £3.9 million loss clocked up in 1995. Earnings per share recovered to 8.42p from a loss of 2.16p in 1995. The dividend has been restored to 2p a share for the year.

Hambro Countrywide sold 83,844 houses in the year, a rise of 28 per cent on 1995. The company said that the housing market is improving across the country, although there are still regional differences. London and the South East are outpacing other areas.

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MICHAEL CLARK

Ladbroke was up 11p to 236p after a profits advance

[illegible]

EUROPEAN MON		
Currency	7 day	1 yr
Dollar	5-4 1/2	10-10 1/2
Deutschmark	3 1/2-2 1/2	10-10 1/2
French Franc	3-3 1/2	10-10 1/2
French Franc	3-3 1/2	10-10 1/2
Yen	3-3 1/2	10-10 1/2
GOLD/PRECIOUS M		
Gold Bullion: Open \$352.00-352.30	Close \$352.00	
Low: \$351.00-351.30	AME: \$352.00	
Unmargined: \$351.00-354.00	\$2.80-2.80-220.00	
Platinum: \$362.00-\$236.70	Silver \$5.19	
STERLING SPOT AN		
UK Rates for March 6	Range	
Amsterdam	2.1180-2.1230	
Berlin	20.040-21.200	
Brussels	10.040-10.072	
Frankfurt	1.0327-1.0359	
London	2.1695-2.1713	
Madrid	23.81-23.81.5	
Paris	23.31-23.44.48	
Rome	2.745-2.75.24	
Stockholm	2.184-2.2.206	
Switzerland	16.027-16.154	
U.S. New York	1.1177-1.1.264	
Zurich	9.5380-9.540	
Antwerp	12.30-12.975	
Brussels	195.43-196.12	
Geneva	19.420-19.530	
London	2.3935-2.4006	
Paris		
Frankfurt		

MAJOR CHANGES

RISES:
 Baby (J) 181 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+53p)
 Flare 180 (+15 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Arjo Wiggins 135 (+15 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Northern (J) 135 (+15 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Sander Farm 152 (+10 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Ricks-Royce 255 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+18p)
 RPS Group 202 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+11 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 CPL Aromas 219 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+11 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Carn Energy 574 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+28p)
 Ladbroke 236 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+11 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Hanson 301 (+14 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Call Allen 417 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+17 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Securitor 330 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+13 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 DCS Group 300 (+12 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Browns & Little 82 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+27 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Highland 394 (+18 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Chromac 394 (+12 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Legal & Gen 408 (+12 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Flying Fish Flts 280 (+8 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Waste Mgt Int'l 237 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+7 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 TEMAP 768 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+21 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Capita Group 865 (+18 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Closes Bros 420 (+10 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 BAT 548 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+18p)

FALLS:
 English 80 (+11p)
 Redbus 200 (+23p)
 Darnley 590 (+34p)
 Azanka Bc Sys 642 (+17 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 FI Group 561 (+14 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Lux Service 351 (+18 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Hinchley 680 (+15 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)
 Royal & Sun 694 (+9 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)

Battening Glaxo's growth. In theory, anyway. The reality is somewhat less grim. Zantac, while still Glaxo's bestseller, accounted for only 23 per cent of sales in 1996, of which slightly more than half were made in the US. The most pessimistic outlook sees generic competition eliminating 50 per cent of Zantac's US sales, a scenario that would be fully reflected in the share price. Glaxo, however, would be crucified if it took anything but a highly conservative

YEAR ago the bookmaking industry seemed to be in terminal decline. While the lottery state custom, the bookies struggled to rid themselves of their fags and beer image. Betting shop owners cried foul and were rewarded with a series of deregulation measures. Yesterday, Ladbroke demonstrated that the reforms could work to its advantage. Not only did the core punters return to the fold, but modern shops and new games have captured new money. As Ladbroke gleefully pointed out yesterday, the boot is now on the other foot with Camelot carping about unfair competition from the bookies' fixed-odds lotteries.

The revival in betting has a twin effect: the company's return to growth is ensured, but it also makes Ladbroke a distinctly more attractive takeover target for hotelier groups with their sights on the Hilton brand. Hilton

chain, may well use its option to increase its stake up to 20 per cent to shore up its company. But with uplift in potential from the alliance of the two companies, Ladbroke looks a good punt.

Airbus

AIRBUS has made its strongest case yet for building "superjumbos", aircraft capable of carrying more than 500 people. Executives in Toulouse were clearly miffed by Boeing's announcement last December that there was no market for such aircraft. The Airbus view is that airlines spurned Boeing's offer of stretched 747 because they wanted a new aircraft rather than a jumbo with a loft extension. Who would provide such an aircraft? Why, only Airbus. Boeing's competitor, planning a new aircraft, and Boeing acting as spoiler by prolonging the market non-existence.

So much for the dog fight

their superjumbo makes a financial sense. Is there a real demand for it? Airbus reckons there is and points to figures suggesting that air travel will treble over the next 20 years with strong growth in flights to Asia and within the Asia-Pacific region. These require ever larger aircraft because of the scarcity of runway space. Furthermore, its airlines are said to have expressed strong interest in the superjumbo, including United Airlines which is already flying two 747s within 15 minutes of each other on the Los Angeles to Tokyo route in order to satisfy demand for seats.

If Airbus is right, the superjumbo would be a big boost for British industry. Not only would British Aerospace win a substantial share of the work, but Rolls-Royce is also poised to supply the engines.

EDITED BY CARL MORTISHES

LONDON FINANCIAL FUTURES						
	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol
Long Gilt						
Previous open interest: 26040	Mar 97	111.00	111.07	111.27	111.28	4134
	Jun 97	111.14	111.25	111.49	111.51	8536
German Govt Bond (BTP)						
Previous open interest: 24358	Mar 97	101.11	102.02	101.58	101.61	93296
	Jun 97	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.02	100
Italian Govt Bond (BTP)						
Previous open interest: 95382	Mar 97	126.80	127.49	126.98	127.10	62720
	Jun 97	126.82	127.40	126.00	127.02	304
Japanese Govt Bond (JGB)						
	Mar 97	120.59	120.96	120.62	120.62	906
	Jun 97	120.48	120.48	120.57	120.59	2000
Three Mth Sterling						
Previous open interest: 52075	Mar 97	92.74	92.76	92.75	92.75	14811
	Jun 97	92.84	92.86	92.83	92.87	31604
	Sep 97	93.32	93.40	93.31	93.35	20404
Three Mth Eurodollar						
Previous open interest: 125068	Mar 97	96.76	96.76	96.74	96.75	22026
	Apr 97	96.77	96.77	96.76	96.76	18301
Three Mth Eurodollar						
Previous open interest: 28475	Mar 97	92.67	92.70	92.66	92.68	7544
	Jun 97	92.68	92.70	92.69	92.71	8247
Three Mth Euroyen						
	Mar 97	99.43	99.43	99.43	99.42	4142
	Jun 97	99.30	99.33	99.30	99.32	1190
Three Mth Euroswiss						
Previous open interest: 111320	Mar 97	98.15	98.20	98.12	98.14	4219
	Jun 97	98.17	98.21	98.14	98.17	90201
Three Mth ECU						
Previous open interest: 34711	Mar 97	95.76	95.76	95.76	95.78	753
	Jun 97	95.77	95.78	95.77	95.77	917
FTSE 100						
Previous open interest: 71816	Mar 97	4375.5	4390.0	4374.0	4379.0	179.0
	Jun 97	4399.0	4405.5	4395.0	4399.0	46.0

Overseas Bill (Discount)	2 mths 5% 3 mths 5% 6 mths 5% 12 mths 5%	Week float: 6
Prime Bank Bills (Discount)	1 mths 5% 2 mths 5% 3 mths 5% 6 mths 5% 12 mths 5%	
Interbank Money Rates:		
sterling	6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8	6 1/8 6 1/8
Swiss franc	6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8	6 1/8 6 1/8
Overseas open 3% close 6 1/8		
Lending Authority Days	5% 5 1/2 6 6 1/2 6 1/2 6 1/2	6 1/2 6 1/2
Overseas 1% 1 1/2 1 1/2 1 1/2 1 1/2 1 1/2 1 1/2		
Dollar Bill	5.35 5 1/2 5 1/2 5 1/2 5 1/2 5 1/2 5 1/2	5 1/2 5 1/2
Banking Society CDs:	6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8 6 1/8	6 1/8 6 1/8

EUROPEAN MONEY DEPOSITS (%)					
Currency	1 day	1 month	3 months	6 months	Call
Dollar	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2
Deutschmark	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2
French Franc	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2
Swiss Franc	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2
Yen	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2

GOLD/PRECIOUS METALS (Baird & Co)					
Gold Bullion: Open \$352.00-352.30	Close \$352.00-352.50	High \$353.45-353.95	Low \$351.10-351.60		
Overseas Bullion: Open \$351.00-351.55	Close \$352.15	High \$353.10	Low \$350.10-350.65		
Unrefined: \$351.00-354.00	\$218.00-220.00				
Silver: \$32.00-32.25	\$31.75-32.00	\$31.75-32.00	\$31.75-32.00	\$31.75-32.00	\$31.75-32.00

STERLING SPOT AND FORWARD RATES					
Rate for March 6		Rate	Close	1 month	3 months
American	\$1.1118-1.1120	5.1176-5.1182	5.1176-5.1182	5.1176-5.1182	5.1176-5.1182
Dollar	57.00-57.10	15.30-15.35	15.30-15.35	15.30-15.35	15.30-15.35
Overseas	10.50-10.52	10.50-10.52	10.50-10.52	10.50-10.52	10.50-10.52
Indian	1.032-1.038	1.033-1.039	1.033-1.039	1.033-1.039	1.033-1.039
Rand	2.655-2.733	2.691-2.771	2.691-2.771	2.691-2.771	2.691-2.771
South Africa	2.71-2.78	2.71-2.78	2.71-2.78	2.71-2.78	2.71-2.78
Swiss	2.03-2.04	2.03-2.04	2.03-2.04	2.03-2.04	2.03-2.04
Yen	2.743-2.752	2.745-2.754	2.745-2.754	2.745-2.754	2.745-2.754
Yen	2.195-2.206	2.195-2.206	2.195-2.206	2.195-2.206	2.195-2.206
Yen	1.800-1.814	1.816-1.825	1.816-1.825	1.816-1.825	1.816-1.825
Yen	1.17-1.171	1.171-1.171	1.171-1.171	1.171-1.171	1.171-1.171
Yen	3.30-3.30	3.30-3.30	3.30-3.30	3.30-3.30	3.30-3.30
Yen	12.92-12.95	12.93-12.95	12.93-12.95	12.93-12.95	12.93-12.95
Yen	10.45-10.45	10.45-10.45	10.45-10.45	10.45-10.45	10.45-10.45
Yen	14.95-14.97	14.96-14.97	14.96-14.97	14.96-14.97	14.96-14.97
Yen	2.93-2.94	2.94-2.94	2.94-2.94	2.94-2.94	2.94-2.94

DOLLAR RATES		WALL STREET	
Australia	1.27-1.28	Mar 8	Mar 8
Belgium (Com)	35.46-35.50	Mar 8	Mar 8
Brazil	13.36-13.44	Mar 8	Mar 8
Canada	5.58-5.59	Mar 8	Mar 8
France	5.7592-5.7602	Mar 8	Mar 8
Germany	1.9011-1.9022	Mar 8	Mar 8
Holland	2.0432-2.0438	Mar 8	Mar 8
Italy	2.0432-2.0438	Mar 8	Mar 8
Japan	1.5580-1.5590	Mar 8	Mar 8
Switzerland	1.030-1.0305	Mar 8	Mar 8
United Kingdom	1.24-1.25	Mar 8	Mar 8
Sweden	2.4755-2.4764	Mar 8	Mar 8
Taiwan	1.9011-1.9022	Mar 8	Mar 8
Thailand	2.0432-2.0438	Mar 8	Mar 8
West Germany	1.9011-1.9022	Mar 8	Mar 8
Yugoslavia	1.5580-1.5590	Mar 8	Mar 8
Other Sterling	1.9011-1.9022	Mar 8	Mar 8
Argentina paper	2.0432-2.0438	Mar 8	Mar 8
Australia dollar	1.27-1.28	Mar 8	Mar 8
Canada dollar	5.58-5.59	Mar 8	Mar 8
France franc	5.7592-5.7602	Mar 8	Mar 8
Germany mark	1.9011-1.9022	Mar 8	Mar 8
Holland guilder	2.0432-2.0438	Mar 8	Mar 8
Italy lira	2.0432-2.0438	Mar 8	Mar 8
Japan yen	1.5580-1.5590	Mar 8	Mar 8
Switzerland franc	1.030-1.0305	Mar 8	Mar 8
United Kingdom pound	1.24-1.25	Mar 8	Mar 8
Sweden krona	2.4755-2.4764	Mar 8	Mar 8
Taiwan dollar	1.9011-1.9022	Mar 8	Mar 8
Thailand baht	2.0432-2.0438	Mar 8	Mar 8
West Germany mark	1.9011-1.9022	Mar 8	Mar 8
Yugoslavia dinar	1.5580-1.5590	Mar 8	Mar 8
Other Sterling	1.9011-1.9022	Mar 8	Mar 8
Argentina paper	2.0432-2.0438	Mar 8	Mar 8
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Other Sterling	1.9011-1.9022	Mar 8	Mar 8

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Arjo shares boosted by unexpected profits leap

By FRASER NELSON

SHARES of Arjo Wiggins Appleton performed their sharpest leap for five years after the Anglo-French paper producer reported a bigger recovery than expected.

Its heavy restructuring program, which involved cutting its European staff by 12 per cent and closing two factories, delivered cost savings of £8 million over the year. Stabilisation of pulp prices and the resuscitation of general demand helped it to lift pre-tax profits 97 per cent to £134 million, beating forecasts by some £14 million.

The shares gained 17½p to 167½p, their highest for 11 months. Andrew Shaw, finance director, said the pulp prices were still gently declining, which promised that the

recovery would continue. He said: "There is no cloud hanging over us at the moment, and unless there is another collapse in pulp prices, there is no reason why the recovery should not continue."

However, the company gave warning that some businesses were building up private paper reserves. Demand could be threatened, it said, if they started using their own stocks rather than buying new paper in the market.

Arjo spent £20 million on job cuts and factory closures over the year and plans to spend a further £30 million completing the moves this year. However, it hopes to recover this through cost savings this year, and expects to strip £50 million of costs in 1998.

The thermal paper division, which produces paper for fax machines, suffered from a difficult market over the year. The company said it will close a plant in Lincoln and move a scaled-down operation to its plant in Cardiff. It said this was typical of the changes it is making throughout Europe.

Appleton Papers, its North American business, staged a strong comeback in the second half, with operating profit doubling to £66.7 million (£39.5 million). The woodfree paper business, which it bought just before the collapse of the market in 1995, also began to recover.

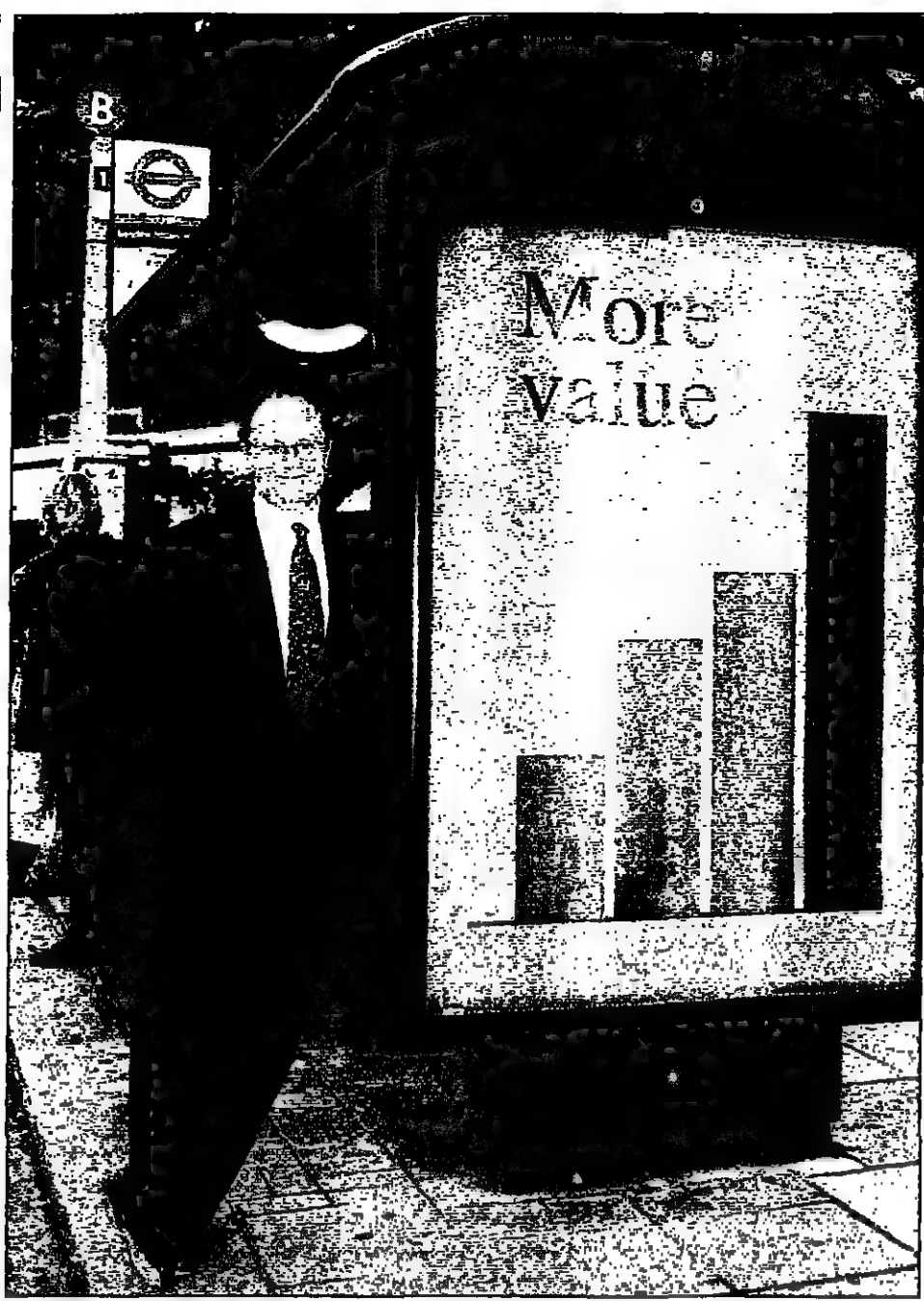
While group turnover was stagnant at £357 billion, the cost savings helped earnings to shoot to 10.2p (2.3p) before exceptional items. In spite of this rise, the final dividend is frozen at 7.5p, with a final 4.6p due on May 28. The company, formed when Wiggins Teape Appleton merged with Arjomari Froux soon after being floated off by BAT Industries seven years ago, is now expected by the City to make £210 million during 1997 and deliver earnings of 16.3p per share. The shares closed at 165½p.

Safeway in talks on Ulster deal

FITZWILTON, the Dublin-based company that owns the Wellworth chain of supermarkets in Northern Ireland, should reach agreement about a proposed joint venture with Safeway before the end of this month, a source close to the company said yesterday (Eileen McCabe writes).

Although both sides refuse to comment, it is believed that a sell-off of at least 50 per cent of Wellworth to Safeway for about £180 million is high on the agenda. There are also suggestions that the two might agree a joint venture to operate outlets in the Irish Republic.

Wellworth is a long-established, major player in Northern Ireland, with 37 stores and a 21 per cent market share.



Roger Parry beside an Adshel that publicises the company's message

Revamp in Belgium and France hits More

By MARTIN BARROW

A £53 million exceptional charge against the restructuring of operations in France and Belgium caused a 14 per cent fall in pre-tax profits at More Group, the international outdoor advertising agency, in 1996.

The company, best known for its Adshel brand widely seen on UK high streets, said French and Belgian operations had been hampered by an outdated product range and difficult local markets.

Profits before tax and exceptional items rose to £18.3 million, from £15 million, on turnover that rose to £102.7 million, from £87.3 million. More reported an increase in the yield per advertising panel achieved in the UK and Ireland, reflecting improved service levels and better marketing as well as strong underlying economic growth.

The £77.3 million acquisition of Wernergren-Williams, the Scandinavian Group, completed in December, did not make a significant contribution to the results.

Roger Parry, chief executive, said: "The marketing initiatives taken early in the year in the UK and Ireland have been a great success. At the end of the year we made radical changes in France and Belgium, which will bring benefits in the future."

A final dividend of 11.4p a share lifts the total to 15p from 13.8p. Underlying earnings rose 22 per cent to 36p a share.

Heal's poised to raise £12m with flotation

By GEORGE SIVELL

HEAL'S, the department store group bought by its management from Storehouse in 1990, is to list on the London Stock Exchange with first dealings expected on March 24.

The flotation will enable NatWest Ventures to sell its holding and management shareholders to sell part of their holdings. It is understood that the three executive directors and two senior managers will share about £1.5 million of the proceeds. It is expected NatWest will take out £8

million. The placing will raise £12 million out of which £1.75 million will go towards investment in existing stores and to develop new sites. Heal's has stores in central London and at Guildford in Surrey.

Heal's made a pre-tax profit of £1.8 million in the 53 weeks to September 14 and £1.6 million in the 20 weeks to February 1, the period in which it normally makes 90 per cent of its full-year operating profit. It is expected to float on March 18.

John Mowlem builds to a seven-year high

By FRASER NELSON

JOHN MOWLEM, the construction group that returned to profit last summer, yesterday reinforced its recovery with its strongest set of final results for seven years.

The company made a pre-tax profit of £16.7 million last year, against the £30 million loss incurred after heavy redundancy costs in 1995.

The results were achieved in spite of a 3 per cent drop in revenues to £1.41 billion.

John Gains, appointed chief executive two years ago, said

the results were entirely the result of good housekeeping: a number of loss-making contracts had been shed.

Mr Gains said that the company's prospects would be still further enhanced this year after the flotation of its Access division.

Its shares gained 7p yesterday, to 135p. Earnings were 8.1p per share, against a 17.6p loss last time.

A final dividend of 2p is due on July 1, lifting the total to 3p, after 2p last time.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

IMI expands with \$39m deal in US

IMI, the UK engineering group, is expanding its drink dispensing interests through the purchase of Wilshire, the privately owned corporation, for \$39 million. Wilshire is a leading American manufacturer of drinks dispensing equipment. In 1996 the business earned pre-tax profits of \$2.8 million on turnover of \$60 million. The net value of assets being acquired is \$8.5 million.

Wilshire employs about 400 people and has manufacturing plants in Connecticut, Illinois and Ontario. IMI will fund the acquisition from existing bank facilities and is expected to enhance earnings in 1997. Gary Allen, chief executive of IMI, said Wilshire's customer base in the US was complementary. "The potential for its highly regarded products is significantly enhanced through IMI's global sales and distribution network."

Bidders secure Whessoe

THE overseas bidders for Whessoe, the engineering group based in the North East, announced yesterday that they spoke for 51 per cent of Whessoe. Navia and Endress & Hauser said they now own or have agreed to acquire shares representing a 51 per cent stake. After settlement of outstanding share purchases, the offer will be declared unconditional, the companies said, adding that the offer will lapse if referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Ocean rises by £9m

OCEAN, the transport group, raised profits before tax and exceptional items from £54 million to £63 million in the year to December 31 on sales up marginally from £1.13 billion to £1.14 billion. The total dividend for the year rises from 14.33p to 15.2p out of earnings up from 10.4p to 28.2p. The company said that its aim was to grow into a leading player in the global logistics business and at the same time produce consistent progress in earnings.

Valeo expands in Wales

VALEO, the French automotive components company, is to invest another £14 million at its Gorseion plant in West Glamorgan, creating more than 170 jobs. Valeo currently employs 470 people at the factory, which is the company's largest plant in the UK. The factory produces heating and air conditioning units for cars. The Welsh Development Agency will help to build a 35,000 sq ft extension at the factory and also be involved in skills training for new staff.

Bunzl grows in Oregon

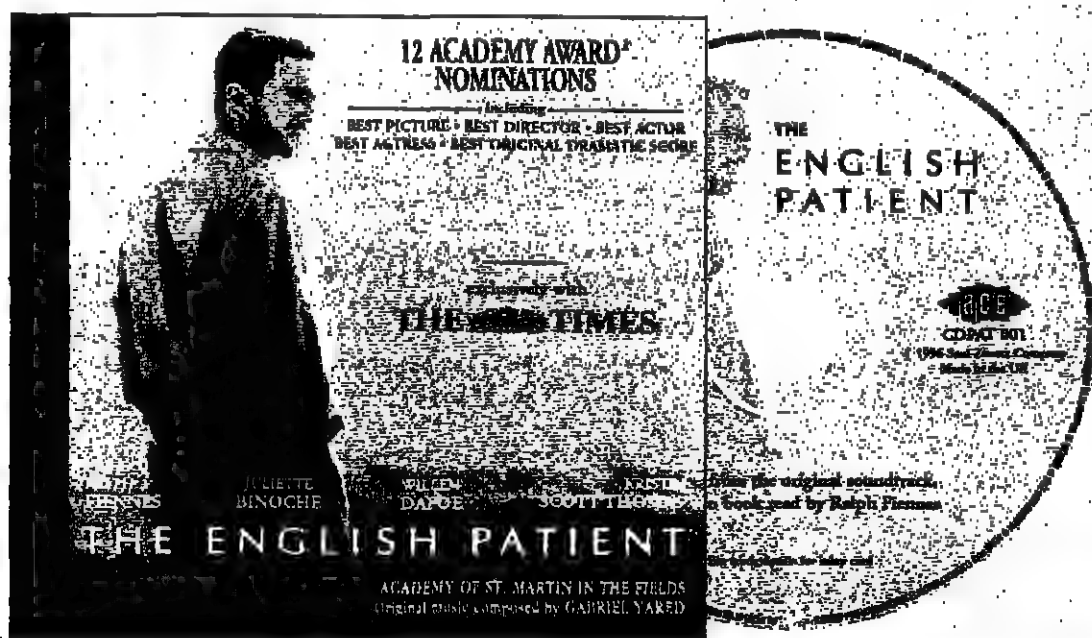
BUNZL, the paper and packaging group, said it has acquired Kenco Sales, a disposables redistribution company based in Portland, Oregon. Financial details were not disclosed. Bunzl said that the acquired business, which serves customers in Oregon and parts of southern Idaho, had annual sales of \$13 million in 1996, and will be merged with Bunzl's existing business in Portland. Net assets acquired at completion are estimated to be £900,000.

Kode holds steady

KODE INTERNATIONAL overcame difficult trading conditions in the printed circuit board industry to hold profits unchanged at £1.4 million before tax and exceptional items in 1996 on turnover that fell slightly to £18.3 million from £19.4 million. There was an exceptional charge of £495,000 associated with a discontinued computer services business. The total dividend is lifted to 2.5p a share from 1p, with a 1.75p final.

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1996/97	1996/97	1996/97	1996/97
High	Low	Company	Price
100	95	ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES	
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100	95	BANKS	
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100	95	BREWERS, PUBS & REST	
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1996/97	1996/97	1996/97	1996/97
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100	95	ENGINEERING	
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1996/97	1996/97	1996/97	1996/97
High	Low	Company	Price
100	95	SHORTS (under 5 years)	
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1996/97	1996/97	1996/97	1996/97
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100	95	LONGS (over 15 years)	
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100	95	INDEX-LINKED on projected inflation at	
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BACH
Ton Kluge



THEATRE 1

The American stage adaptation of *Birdy* is an offbeat but fascinating new offering for the West End



THEATRE 2

Volcano's latest touring production, *The Message*, makes for a strange and puzzling night out

THE TIMES ARTS



MUSIC 1

Simon Rattle and the CBSO resurrect the quintessential Sixties work, Berio's *Sinfonia*



MUSIC 2

... while fragments of unfinished Schubert are tantalisingly reconstructed at the Festival Hall

THEATRE: An intriguing transfer from book to film to fringe to the West End stage. Plus an Irish comedy; and a muddled message

Ruffled male feathers

Could there be something right with the West End? There have been no fewer than four openings this week on the Great Grey Way, among them a play I never thought any impresario would be brave enough to lift from its slot on the Hammersmith fringe last year.

Is there really an audience for a title character who spends nine-tenths of the evening perched on or near a bedstead, arms folded like wings, head jerking this way and that, mouth silently cooing? If so, we shall all have reason to rejoice, for *Birdy* itself is the theatrical counterpart of one of those rare, speckled warblers that send ornithologists into the hills at dawn with high-tech binoculars in their knapsacks.

The American novelist William Wharton published his *Birdy* in 1978. Our own Alan Parker made a movie of it six years later. Now Naomi Wallace, an American dramatist who has staged most of her work here, has adapted the novel into a highly original play about

the transformation of two human fledglings into two wounded grown-ups — or, as she writes in the published text, "about the dehumanising process boys are forced to undergo in order to become acceptable 'men' in our society".

Her case is strengthened by the fact that much of the play occurs in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Events in a particularly dehumanising male pursuit have shattered one man's mind and his best friend's jaw. Matthew Wait's *Birdy*, reduced as he is to a sort of avian catatonia, is shut up in a psychiatric hospital. But Rob Morrow's bandaged Al, brought in as a last-ditch cure by a desperate army doctor, is not a lot less trapped himself. Inside him, ominously festering, are fears, anger and bitter memories of the father who hit and humiliated him. Only at the end does either man achieve any kind of release.

It doesn't sound enough either to sustain an evening or to round out a couple of main characters. Wal-

Birdy Comedy

lace's answer to these worries, which is to give each man a boyhood double and skip to and fro in time, brings with it the danger of distracting us from the urgency of the situation and lowering dramatic tension. And maybe there were moments when I began to want to leave Adam Garcia's Young Al and Tam Williams's Young Birdy, busy bonding on top of a spinning, tilting white disc, and return to the painful present as it unfolded in the white-tiled room below. But Wallace's deft writing and Kevin Knight's skilful direction nipped impatience in the bud.

One boy, obsessed with everything winged and feathered, dreams of flight and at one point transforms himself into a cloth-and-aluminium flying machine. The other does endless press-ups and prepares for the day when he will be able to beat up his abusive

father. Their dual oddities lead to some lively scenes, especially a mildly homoerotic one (Wallace neither ducks nor labours the sexual implications) in which Young Al prepares a quaking Birdy for a date at the school prom. But the serious point, that one boy is escaping his maleness and the other is in danger of turning it into macho display, is seriously made. Yet it is the events beneath that really grip, thanks to Wait's bravura bird imitations and Morrow's ability to suggest a mix of sensitivity, love and rage behind the doped detached manner he adopts for the benefit of Richard Duden's exasperated shrink.

Am I right to think that the evening's weirdest moment, when Al gently spits chewed food into Birdy's gaping beak, was more disturbing and touching back in W6? Even if so, this is fascinatingly offbeat stuff to find in the West End.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

painting rivulets) like unwanted mortar among the shiny tiles, their conversations — and some attractive ensemble playing — come into focus.

Lacking in pretension of any sort, *Stone the Crow* is careful not to pose or answer too many questions. Even when the story does obliquely raise realpolitik ethical issues, the intention never seems to be to tease out answers, but simply to evoke a way of life in which work is by definition draining, unsatisfying and ultimately pointless. What exactly McCafferty wants us to do with this distinctly uncheery information remains unclear, as enigmatic indeed, as the stack of tiles that is snared under a tight spotlight as the play draws to a close.

LUKE CLANCY

Night on the tiles

Stone the Crow
Druid, Galway

Socrates (David Ganley), more of a muddler than a philosopher, fantasise that a cash injection is just what is required to straighten out the kinks in their relationships with wives and children. Ding-Ding (Patrick Walden has more than a hint of Cyril Cusack at his most curmudgeonly) is on the brink of retirement without the resources to buy the window-cleaning round that might modestly fund his retirement.

The only one with a dream

ALFRED HITCHCOCK would undoubtedly have judged a pallet of bathroom tiles as too short on uncanny fascination to use as a McGuffin, but for Owen McCafferty, it serves just fine to animate the plot of his latest play, *Setting Stone the Crow* in a half-finished bathroom peopled by tired, thwarted labourers strongly suggests, however, that uncanny fascination is hardly what McCafferty is searching for here.

As the members of a crew of Irish fliers finish off a large job, they become convinced that a few boxes of tiles, apparently overlooked and then forgotten by their owner, might, when converted into hard currency through the black market, provide the answer to all their problems.

Peteasy (Anthony Brophy), the hard centre of the crew, and



Flying in the face of credibility in Nigel Charnock's *The Message*

So, Lady Macbeth, tell us what you saw

The stage is bathed in sky-blue light, a Mediterranean sky-blue because we will be taken first to Argos, where Klytemnestra awaits the husband who butchered their daughter in exchange for a fair wind to Troy. The light will be red ere long, and Volcano Theatre's cast of four will either be wearing costumes the colour of blood or smeared with gobs of the stuff. For 75 minutes they will proclaim or confide in us tales of slaughter, and seek to express the pain of it through vigorous movement.

From a programme note we

learn that the original intention of the show was to indicate the role of the Messenger in drama, fiction and history. Had the company provided this, their efforts, guided by Nigel Charnock's direction and choreography, might have created a clearer experience. A later proposal was to look at the role of the eyewitness, which in theory could give us anything from Eve's account of apple-picking to laboratory notes on sheep cloning.

What Charnock and his team do is not so universally embracing as this but yet wide enough to explore too little in particular. We have the

The Message Lyric, Hammersmith

chilling account of the machine-gunner at the extermination camp, sitting with his legs dangling over the pit of corpses while enjoying a cigarette. We also have personal contributions by the two men (Paul Davies, Jan Knightly), wittily sharing accounts of the death of a father, the birth of a child. What do these events have in common that usefully brings them together? Sometimes men die in bed,

sometimes in Auschwitz. So? What of the choreography? There is running around, there is standing in a line. When the four of them, dressed in black at this point, are spaced equally across the stage, waving arms and pulling faces, the effect recalls the famous sleeve of *Help!* In another sequence, Fern Smith repeatedly throws herself at the men and is caught. If the intention is to show her struggling in vain to overcome opposition, why does she always direct herself into their arms?

Another quirk is to include more murderous women than men

among those who are given their say. Even the short excerpt from *Macbeth* presents her as killer, him as procurator. Since neither of them is an eyewitness or messenger, I don't see what they are doing there. The most moving corner of this puzzling evening came when June Broughton quietly spoke a poem by H. Munro (whom I take to be "Saki") telling of a soldier dead in the trenches. A single minute more intense than all the rolling and the leaping and the piercing cries of woe.

JEREMY KINGSTON

CONCERTS: Berio's *Sinfonia* is revived; and Schubert's Tenth Symphony gets a speculative performance

It would be perverse to exclude a work like Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia* from a survey of the Sixties just because it is so much of the Sixties. But, even as Sir Simon Rattle and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra move nearer and nearer Towards the Millennium, it is not too late to ask what else that work has, apart from its trendy 1968 birth certificate.

It has Levi-Strauss and Samuel Beckett, both of them electronically drip-fed into the orchestral texture by way of the microphones of the eight vocal soloists. It has a movement devoted to the name of Martin Luther King, gradually assembled out of its constituent vowels and consonants. It also has a prolonged allusion to the scherzo of Mahler's Resurrection Symphony upon which is superimposed a collage of material from several other composers. And who, honestly, on hearing those quotes, would not escape into the music they represent rather than remain exposed to a corrosive wash

Essence of the Sixties

CBSO/Rattle
Birmingham

of half-understood words and semi-detached phonemes?

It is true, on the other hand, that the *Sinfonia* is a powerful Sixties fetish and that Rattle, the CBSO, John Whitling and Electric Phoenix have long experience of collaborating in it. But, next to the massive sincerity of Messiaen's *Et Exspecto Resurrectionem Mortuorum* and the wit of Lutoslawski's Cello Concerto, it does seem to have something cynical and self-conscious about it.

Both the other items in the programme have their show-business aspects. Composed

specifically for Mstislav Rostropovich, the concerto has that cellist's personality written all over it. Happily, Lynn Harrell has the imagination to make the most of the music-theatre element, impersonating the Rostropovich role in such a discreet way as to convert it, eventually, to his own use. The brass attacks on the soloist he seems to take personally, and when it takes off with the melodic line of the Cantilena he does it with immense lyrical conviction.

If the CBSO percussionist in *Et Exspecto* received almost as much applause as the soloist in the Cello Concerto it is because no one can resist the sight of the largest of all beaters repeatedly being taken to the largest of all orchestral tam-tams. It was a token of Messiaen's faith in the monumental and a compensation for what even Symphony Hall cannot offer in terms of the acoustic atmosphere of a Sainte Chapelle or a Notre Dame de Chartres.

GERALD LARNER

The Schubert bicentenary is testing the ingenuity of many a planner. But there will be few more imaginative approaches than that essayed in the Philharmonia's concert on Wednesday under Christoph von Dohnányi.

The starting point was Schubert's Tenth Symphony, or what remains of that project in sketch form. The fragments suggest a three-movement symphony in D major, and among the attempts to reconstruct are Peter Gülke's performing version of the Andante.

Gülke conceives the movement as a return to the intimate scale of the "Unfinished" Symphony. Dohnányi, for his part, overlaid that conception with a reading that was not only poised and eloquent but also looked unmistakably forward to the more monumental Romantic utterances of the late 19th century.

Berio's *Rendering* also takes up the challenge of the fragments for Schubert's Tenth, but instead of attempt-

Picking up the pieces

Philharmonia/
Dohnányi
Festival Hall

ing a reconstruction, this creative artist offers a "restoration" of the sketches. Berio fills the gaps with passages of dense polyphony, fashioned from those sketches but in contemporary idiom. Introduced by a tinkling celesta effecting a "dissolve", their suspension of metre and tonality throws an unsettling shadow across the bridge between the centuries.

After this, the "Unfinished" Symphony itself provided an unusually satisfying epilogue. From the hushed, mys-

terious rendering of the opening theme on lower strings, it was evident that Dohnányi intended to cast this work, too, in a Romantic light. As is customary, Dohnányi takes the Andante con moto with considerably more gravity, more of a valedictory quality, than one suspects he would if it belonged to a completed work. Yet the vision was genuine, the conviction persuasive.

Schubert was approached from a different angle with a group of Lieder arranged by various composers for baritone and orchestra. If Webern's transcription of *Der Erlkönig* was austere, those by Brahms of *Memnon* and *An Schwager Kronos* were typically warm, while Gilman's *Du bist die Ruh* evoked tranquillity with sustained strings and harp. Taking over from Olaf Bär at short notice, Hakan Hagegard failed to convince that the intimacy of the songs with piano could be captured in another medium.

BARRY MILLINGTON

Order of the boot

RADIO

THE removal of Danny Baker's soccer phone-in, *The Baker Line*, from Radio 5 Live on Wednesday nights marks a watershed. Critics of the BBC who worry about falling standards now have their answer, for here is the BBC at last calling: enough is enough.

Baker was dumped because he had, as the BBC put it, crossed the line "between being lively, humorous and controversial and being insulting to the audience". Yes, but there is more to it than that. The audience for football phone-ins is not easily insulted, often tending towards excessive abuse of teams and, especially, referees. Baker went because he poured petrol, not water, on to the

flames. The last straw was when Baker urged listeners to conduct a campaign of abuse against the referee who awarded a controversial penalty in the Chelsea-Leicester Cup replay. This is pure incitement, pure pandering to yobbery, and as such it has no place on a network which expects to be taken seriously.

Baker has also expressed the view that "most referees need a good slapping". And, having been told to "shut up" by a caller, Baker shouted at his producer on-air about the quality of the callers and said that he wanted his old produc-

er back. All of this matters because phone-in programmes have been espoused by the BBC with relish, but they can be done with a measure of decorum. The quality and attitude of the presenter is invariably taken up by the callers. Nick Ross is the obvious example, but Radio 5 has sporting examples too: David Mellor's 6.06 on Saturday evenings and Dominick Diamond's *Sportscall* on Sundays. To judge by *Sportscall*, the argument for

merly known as *The Baker Line* will be conducted in a more seemly way from now on. Tony Hall, head of BBC News, and Roger Mosey, Controller of Radio 5, have performed a real service by drawing a line in the sand, by making it clear that phone-ins about sport do not have to sound like a post-match argument in a pub car park.

So now Baker and his friend Chris Evans have departed from BBC programmes in short order, each having discovered that the BBC is bigger than any of its personalities. That is good news for those who were beginning to wonder.

PETER BARNARD

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POP 4

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Ever feel you've been had?

Nothing is left to chance in some record companies' profit-greedy manipulation of the charts - and the hero-worshipping kids

Well, it won't be news to you by now that the music industry isn't run like a Buddhist kibbutz: overflowing with light, love and fairness, and founded on strong socialist principles that ensure bands and punters alike get a good deal. No, the music industry is a two-timing, back-stabbing, second-guessing, drug-riddled behemoth with two faces, one nostril and a brain the size of a chicken's.

But what may surprise you is the extent to which the whole thing has been reduced to a game, and how the charts, the press and, in some cases, the music itself have become a meaningless pretence.

In short, how bands and their careers are being reduced to virtual reality.

As you may have noticed, there was a bit of a flap last week when the BBC declared that the charts were basically unreliable. Again, this wasn't really news: the charts are like sailboats - there's always been a certain amount of record company rigging. But, in the past year or so, the companies have become so good at getting the chart position they want that the first week of a single's life is entirely manipulated.

Multiple formats, first-week sale prices of 99p, dishonestly gained knowledge of where chart return shops are situated and, if all else fails, a squad of people in a van buying up copies of the single mean that many executives have been claiming their "high chart entry" bonuses on an almost weekly basis.

The press, too, is not a bastion of truth and impartiality - no shock when considering the tabloids, but what about the dedicated music publications where Group Dogg and Arab Strap are big (well, biggish) news? There are still journalists who accept payment for bestowing the accolade of "single of the week". Expensive lunches, alcohol, trips abroad and cocaine are all employed in getting bands more press. And, with the recent mini-boom that Britpop brought about, some record companies' largesse has even started to extend towards people working in art and layout - just to make sure everyone is "onboard" with a new band, y'know?

Of course, it's all only rock'n'roll, and where would it be without drugs, bribes and a bit of under-the-table, how's-your-father, keep-your-mouth-shut? But the music industry is the UK's third biggest business, so it means millions of pounds' worth of commerce is being manipulated. And, even worse for people who love music, it means that an awful number of good bands on little, independent labels simply can't

afford to get into the charts, while rubbish bands on big labels regularly stroll into the Top Ten.

Yeah, and about all those formula bands doing well at present: what else are Boyzone, Spice Girls, Backstreet Boys and Peter Andre if not Virtual Pop, designed by committees of businessmen heady on demographics, served by production-line songwriters, and presented by sculpted, styled, scripted two-bit hooters? These stars are designed, and their success is not down to the wonder of the music, or the light-house brilliance of their personality; merely how much money their record company has to throw at them, and how canny their manager is.

Of course, the pop world has always had manufactured bands: but the "credible" alternative world is now getting into the act too. Alanis Morissette, one of last year's biggest-selling artists, was given a complete image overhaul and an album's worth of songs by her manager, a rather uncredible forty-

something fella. So much for the radical feminist posturing.

Kula Shaker, another "hip, alternative" band, have been the subject of reams of print in the industry magazine *Music Week*, with label bosses and managers congratulating themselves on their marketing techniques and press strategy, the building of the band's underground credibility and so forth. The pressure to change yourself, to become more marketable, saleable, perfect and virtual extends down to the tiniest band: Steve Jones of Babybird was "informed", before *You're Gorgeous* became a hit and he was still a little fella who scraped into the Top 60, that a couple of weeks at a health farm might not go amiss, as he was a stone over the ideal weight to get into the Top Ten.

Bands are offered "training" for interviews, teaching them the kind of thing they might want to have an opinion on if they want lots of press coverage. Virtual personalities are so much safer than the real, loose-cannon thing.

So, when everything your pop star wears, says, sings or does is decided by management; when most of what the press reports about them is paid for; when the awards they win are fiddled to the point of ridiculousness and the chart position they reach is false and wrong and cheated for, what is real? And what is virtual? What, and where, is British music among all these holograms, flow-charts, strike-teams and stylists? And what was so wrong with bands getting to No 1 simply because people liked them, and their music?



CAITLIN MORAN



Everyone loves the Spice Girls. If they didn't, it would have been because someone in marketing goofed

In the deepest, darkest Cave

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS
The Boatman's Call
(Mute Shum 142 £13.49)
TO HAVE gone from the violent fiction of his last album, *Murder Ballads*, to the intimate confessions of *The Boatman's Call* might have seemed like a sizeable leap for a less literate talent than Nick Cave. But there is a universal quality to Cave's writing which enables him, like a good playwright or novelist, to tease out core emotional truths from his dark musical voyages, irrespective of where the subject-matter takes him.

The songs on *The Boatman's Call* are uniformly slow and, compounded by Cave's sombre vocal signature, their mood is more often desolate than not. "There will always be suffering/It flows through life like water," he croons in *Line-Tree Arbour*. Many are about the break-up of his marriage to Vivian Carneiro, and songs such as *Where Do We Go Now But Nowhere?* and *Far from Me* are suffused with pained regret and bitterness: "It's good to hear you're doing so well/But really can't you find somebody else that you can ring and tell?"

Cave also supplies candid details of his liaison with Polly Jean Harvey, the obvious subject of *Black Hair and West Country Girl*: "With a crooked smile and a heart-shaped face/Comes from the West Country where the birds sing bass."

As an album, *The Boatman's Call* provides the most eloquent testimony yet of Cave's stark powers of observation and why poetic skill. But you would not be encouraged to try living with him as a result of hearing it.

JIMI TENOR
Intervention
(Warp 48, £14.49)
US 3
Broadway & 52nd
(Blue Note/Capitol 8 30027 £13.49)

IT MAY be no more than a coincidence that the two coolest albums released this week are aimed squarely at the young dance/club market, yet are both steeped in the history and culture of jazz.

Classically trained on saxophone, piano and flute, the Finnish composer and producer Jimi Tenor marries the sophisticated harmonies of jazz fusion to the old-fashioned funk grooves of 1970s soul, and then sprinkles the mixture

POP ALBUMS

with a fine coating of 1990s loungecore lunacy on his third album, *Intervention*.

Given a Sooty-style organ treatment, the Duke Ellington standard *Caravan* is underpinned by a riotous jungle-goes-Latin percussion track. There are echoes of *Hot Rats* - Frank Zappa on *Tesla*, while *Downtown* updates Curtis Mayfield's *Superfly*-period soundtrack style. The ingenuity of the arrangements and sheer excellence of the performances are rewarding enough, but the marvel of it is that here is a modern dance album rich in old-fashioned melodic detail.

US 3, the outfit led by British DJ and producer Geoff Wilkinson, continue their officially sanctioned raiding of the Blue Note jazz label archives on *Broadway & 52nd*. The album combines samples of old jazz numbers, including Horace Silver's *Sayonara Blues* and Wayne Shorter's *Indian Song*, with new recordings, all topped off by the quickfire vocalise of East Coast rappers KCB and Shabaam Sahdeed. The result is smart and chic.

VAN MORRISON
The Healing Game
(Exile/Polydor 537 101 £13.99)
"HERE I am again... Where I've always been." Van Morrison sings on the title track of his 28th album. While other long-running acts take great pains to ensure that, every so often, their work involves some element of "re-invention", there is a comforting inevitability about a new Morrison album.

We know there will be songs about the great spiritual matters of life, love, faith and remembrance of better days. These will be sung together in gruff, throwaway phrases that are then irritatingly echoed in a Celtic-gospel style by George Fame or one of the other backing singers (in this case Katie Kissoon and Brian Kennedy). There will be exquisite horn arrangements, old-fashioned organ and piano parts (Fame again) and perhaps a bit of crusty harmonica from the Man himself, but never anything so vulgar as a synthesizer or guitar solo.

Sure enough, it all goes exactly according to plan once again on *The Healing Game*, and it all sounds every bit as marvellous as before, albeit without quite the same degree of sunny optimism that informed his Mercury Music Prize-nominated album, *Days Like These*.

DAVID SINCLAIR

Paul Sexton discovers why New Zealand became a crowded house for the witty and pop-wise Mutton Birds

Kiwi seagulls deny they have Finns

Does the next person to call the Mutton Birds "the new Crowded House" qualify for a broken nose? Perhaps not, but it won't be long before New Zealand's hottest property of 1997 can stop smiling politely at the comparison.

The Mutton Birds are now playing on a radio near you with *Come Around*, a song that manages the juggling act of deadpan infectiousness and lyrical wit. A song written by an antipodean group with a sense of humour and an absence of artifice. OK, it does sound familiar.

"When people don't know you at all, some kind of label is useful," says chief Mutton Bird, Don McGlashan, "and I suppose Crowded House is the only band from New Zealand that most people would know about. It's good to be compared with a really good band, and they've inspired a whole generation of Kiwi musicians."

"But, if you are just talking about music, once people know us, they'll see that we're noisier than Crowded House and we don't play our instruments as well."

Come Around is an aperitif for *Envy of Angels*, another gold-selling album in the Birds' home nest (they are named after a type of seagull) that will be their official long-playing debut in this country. The album was recorded in Wales with producer Hugh Jones, a Brit nominee this year for his work with Dodgy and the Bluetones. At the further

risk of incurring that bunch of fives, the album shares with Neil Finn and friends an aura of unpretentious ingenuity, freshly-baked-this-morning melodies and dark, pensive lyrics.

Such an alluring mixture is in part the result of McGlashan's remarkable multimedia background. The Mutton Birds is his second successful band in a CV that also includes film scoring -

notably for Jane Campion's *An Angel at My Table* - a classical music education, acting and musical theatre.

"My dad worked in coal mines in New Zealand," he says. "He was kind of a thwarted musician, so he made sure there were heaps of beaten-up secondhand instruments arriving in the household all the time that I could have a go at from the age of about five. By the time I was a

teenager, I could hold a tune on a lot of things."

McGlashan played in a brass band, had a job in an orchestra for two years and went on to lead the Top Ten local band Blam, Blam, Blam from the drums. These days he also plays a mean euphonium, both on record and as a splendidly incongruous addition to the Mutton Birds' live performance.

McGlashan toured the arts

festival circuit in the late 1980s with the ensemble musical play *The Front Lawn*, playing seasons at Edinburgh and London's Donmar Warehouse. Returning after his collaboration with Campion to the environs of rock'n'roll, he founded the Mutton Birds to fast acclaim at home, but a country with a population less than half that of London brought artistic limitations.

"The gravy train doesn't pick up passengers in New Zealand," he says. "It does in Australia, then it sort of misses out New Zealand and goes somewhere else."

"The music scene there is a really nurturing one for writers and bands, because it's not really connected to the industry, it's just an exotic blip at the edge of the radar screen. We make more music than the people can consume - it's a music mountain, like those European wine lakes - but it's not a very good environment for making a connection with an audience."

Hence the Mutton Birds' awesome collection of Air Miles and, these past few months of recording and gigging, adopted Brit status. It has also meant the departure of guitarist David Long - "He was too homesick; he didn't like the phone ringing and hearing he was going to Holland the following day," McGlashan also admits that the nomadic life brings moments of wilderness.

"There's a 'letters to home' quality about this album, a kind of claustrophobia," he says. "Trouble with You especially is a late-night, staring-at-the-wallpaper kind of song. But we are more reconciled now to the idea of being stateless."

The whole is firmly held together by the virtuosic percussion and the compositions of Gurtu himself, but the album's highlight is a haunting version of *Low Years*, by Cherry's most famous collaborator, Urnette Coleman.

Chris Parker



Noisier than Crowded House and they don't play their instruments as well: the needlessly self-deprecating Mutton Birds

TOP TEN ALBUMS

- 1 (-) Pop U2 (Ireland)
- 2 (2) Spice Spice Girls (Virgin)
- 3 (10) *Everything Must Go* Manic Street Preachers (Epic)
- 4 (5) *Ocean Drive* Lighthouse Family (Wild Card)
- 5 (1) *Attack of the Grey Lantern* Mansun (Parlophone)
- 6 (27) *Dreamland* Robert Miles (Deconstruction)
- 7 (12) *Beautiful Freak* Eels (Dreamworks)
- 8 (11) *Kula Shaker* Kula Shaker (Columbia)
- 9 (17) *Travelling Without Moving* Jamiroquai (Sony SP)
- 10 (13) *Older* George Michael (Virgin)

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United notions

TRILOK GURTU

The Glimpse
(CMP CD 85)

THE Bombay-born percussionist Trilok Gurtu has been ploughing his highly individual world music/jazz/Indian percussion furrow since the mid-1970s, so it is singularly appropriate that this album should be dedicated to the most important pioneer of such fusions, Gurtu's erstwhile leader, the late trumpeter Don Cherry.

Gurtu is adept not only at assembling multi-national casts for his projects, but also at blending their various contributions into coherent musical statements. Here, the voice of Geetha Beatty, the cello and bass of Sweden's Lars Danielsson, the trumpet of Italy's Paolo Fresu and the *kalay* (wooden pipe) of Bulgaria's Teodosii Spassov are among the providers of an extraordinary range of sounds and textures.

The whole is firmly held together by the virtuosic percussion and the compositions of Gurtu himself, but the album's highlight is a haunting version of *Low Years*, by Cherry's most famous collaborator, Urnette Coleman.

JAZZ ALBUMS

LESTER YOUNG

The "Kansas City" Sessions
(Commodore CMD 14022)

ALTHOUGH often thought of as a Dixieland label - other reissues in this series include CDs by Wild Bill Davison and Pee Wee Russell - Commodore also documented a great deal of mainstream jazz between 1938 and the mid-1950s. These sessions - involving Lester Young on clarinet and tenor sax, and featuring trombonist/guitarist Eddie Durham, trumpeters Buck Clayton and Bill Coleman, and trombonist Dicky Wells as well as the Count Basie rhythm section of guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Walter Page and drummer Jo Jones - are classics of the genre.

They are wonderfully informal and relaxed, but effortlessly showcase the skills of the participants, whether easing their way through the blues or exploring the possibilities of standards such as *Them There Eyes* or *I Got Rhythm*.

CHRIS PARKER

Careful with that axe

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POP 5

They were underground heroes and darlings of the critics. Now Morpheus are hitting the big time



POP 6

Looking for attention: Gene show off their strident new image in a clever Norwich gig

THE ARTS



TOMORROW
The European premiere of Ariel Dorfman's *Widows*: read Benedict Nightingale's view



TOMORROW
Do the French actually deserve their reputation for producing the world's most erotic cinema?

Careful with that axe

LIKE Aztec Camera andPrefab Sprout before them, Gene are part of that fine tradition of British groups whose mastery of the well-crafted song has earned them considerable praise but established no clear identity. In Gene's case, their image problem was compounded by a debut album (*Olympian*) that rang with echoes of the Smiths.

Perhaps this is why, two years later, their new record, *Drawn to the Deep End*, adopts a more strident, attention-grabbing style, and the live set is almost exclusively derived from the new era. The only exceptions are two of the

LIVE GIG

Gene
UEA, Norwich

band's earliest songs: *Be My Light*, *Be My Guide* and *For the Dead*.

Their show begins with *New Amusements*, with its dramatic switches of tempo and mood, of loud riffs and elegant trills. Only with *Where are they now?* does the pace slacken. Until then, Steve Mason's guitar has brutally kicked the tunes into life; now, for a brief interlude, he cajoles them. Later he will contribute a silky country rock solo to *Why I Was Born*.

It is also in these more restrained moments that singer Martin Rossiter's voice works best. Dressed in a suit and open-necked shirt, he resembles a rather staid member of the professional classes. He is flanked by a rhythm section — Kevin Miles (bass) and Matt James (drums) — of similarly staid aspect. His singing, though, is all passionate torment. He is also master of the dramatic pause. Mid-way through the lovely *Speak To Me Someone*, the gong cuts dead. Rossiter waits and waits and waits, restarting with a sense of drama that Shirley Bassey might envy.

All this anguish and drama is framed, however, by a touch of irony. The stage recreates a 1950s provincial theatre, red velvet curtains edged with gold tassels form a proscenium arch. Maybe, it suggests, all the passion is only play-acting. The effect is to add a mildly discomfiting, alienating edge to a clever show.

JOHN STREET

Suspect by name and eccentric by instrumentation, Morpheus have made it against all odds. David Sinclair reports

Mr Sandman, send me a dream



"Our music has been used in television shows and movies and during the links in the MTV Awards. To me that means it's an accessible sound," says Morpheus's Mark Sandman

relaxed and fluid musical environment with its network of impromptu loft parties and word-of-mouth gigs, so unlike the formal, and highly pressurised, club scenes in New York and Los Angeles.

"We kept it pretty low-key, practically a secret," Sandman says in his deep, sleepy drawl. "There was no hype, and really no ambition either. Our focus was to develop this core sound that we had."

"On the first album [*Good*, released in 1992] I played a one-string bass, which meant everything was in the same key. At that time we were big into the key of D. We've opened it out a bit since then. This new album we're checking out the key of A."

The band's unique sound rests on the twin pillars of Sandman's slinky bass lines and Colley's equally deep, grumpy horn parts. An admir-

er of jazz saxophonist John Coltrane, Colley has been influenced on a more practical level by the guitar playing of Jimi Hendrix and Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top, while Sandman also throws Muddy Waters and Prince into his personal mix of favourites.

Originally a guitarist himself, Sandman's fascination with customised instruments goes back to the days when he played in an unknown group called Supergroup alongside Chris Ballew, another two-stringed bass player, who has since found fame and fortune with the Presidents of the United States of America.

"When we were in Supergroup we used to spontaneously compose pop songs based on titles suggested by the audience, and do all kinds of crazy improvisational stuff," Sandman says. "Chris is a master at making up

lyrics, an absolute genius. We used to tape the shows and we got a lot of ideas that eventually became real songs for both Morpheus and the Presidents. Their song *Kitty* is named after the cat that lives in my house. Morpheus's song *Shelia* is about its owner."

Sandman's noir-ish lyrics are the perfect foil for the band's languid sound. "I move

slowly underwater, I know my way around," he sings on *Wishing Well*, while his bass laps slyly around the ankles of the bear. "Early to bed, early to rise/Makes a man and woman miss out on the night life," he warns over the tip-toe funk riff of *Early to Bed*.

"Night life is what happens after dark," Sandman says. "It's not necessarily pouring

lots of liquor into your stomach. We're not a hard-partying band. But I would say we are definitely nocturnal."

The dark corners are what make the band's music so intriguing. "The day they find a cure for pain is the day I throw my drugs away," Sandman sang on the title track of their 1993 album, *Cure for Pain*. But isn't Morpheus a

pretty sinister choice of name for a pop group?

"You could look at it that way. It's a drug that is used routinely in hospitals for relieving pain. There's nothing sinister about that," Sandman says, rather disingenuously. "It's just a name that stuck."

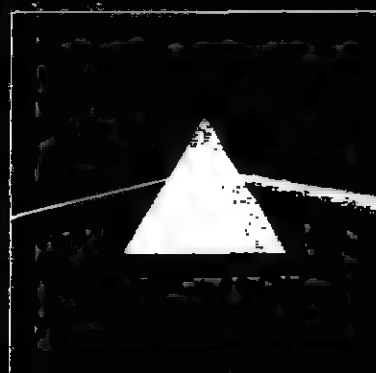
● Morpheus's album, *Like Swimming*, is released by Rykodisc on Monday

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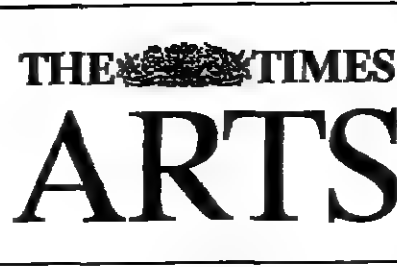
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The Conquistador
Civic Theatre,
San Diego

"The production, efficiently conducted by Karen Keitner, was dominated by Jerry Hadley's performance as Don Luis"

tempting to draw comparisons with Pfitzner. He has spent his life as professor of composition in leading US institutions. His idiom is conservative, and as he himself wryly remarks, those whose appreciation stops dead with Puccini will find him dangerously caecophonous, while modernists will think him hopelessly reactionary; in our terms his musical language lies somewhere between Vaughan Williams and Britten. His score is expertly crafted, ingeniously orchestrated (words easily audible), "correct" in every way; but as with *Palestrina*, those indefinable elements of inspiration and *melos* are only intermittently evident. He illustrates

rather than leads — let alone overtake — the libretto.

San Diego Opera's production, efficiently conducted by Karen Keltner, was dominated by one towering performance: that of Jerry Hadley as Don Luis, and no praise could be too high for a tenor of his international stature committing himself so wholeheartedly to new work. He was in ringing voice, and brought a glowing intensity to his impersonation. There were vivid performances from Kenneth Cox as Father Bernardino, the framing narrator, and Louis Otey and John Duykers as the villainous Viceroy and Inquisitor. Adria Firestone was especially tell-

Had the director Sharon Ochs had more than just two-and-a-half weeks to rehearse so complex a show, she might have got beyond mere traffic direction — the direct address to the audience built into the libretto could certainly be developed. And development is what *Conquistador* deserves: some discreet trimming (we were in the theatre for nearly four hours), some sharpening, some workshoping: the pertinent subject-matter alone should guarantee the opera a future.

RODNEY MILNES

Russian spice in a favourite dish

Tosca
Covent Garden

Maria Guleghina. The Russian soprano, who made her Royal Opera debut as Fedora 15 months ago, now steps into a role that is the very incarnation of her histrionic skills.

She is an imperious, volatile, and highly theatrical Tosca from her first moment on stage until her last. In the body sweeps through space, her voice is both powerful and

enough to find resinous melody in the loudest, most orchestrally challenged passages; and the imagination is keen enough to tune the senses to every passing orchestral soloist, every verbal scent of thyme or rose.

Guleghina poses a formidable challenge to any Cavaradossi; and Keith Olsen, returning to the role, sounds only serviceable by her side, and at times disconcertingly threadbare at the top of his register. But Guleghina is certainly equally matched with her compatriot Sergei Leiferkus, now quite an old hand as Covent Garden's

Scarpia. Like the diva herself, his sheer physical presence never fails to compel attention: the body language is one of urbane irony, and the natural sibilance of the voice snakes its way through vocal lines toughened by steel.

The essential reinforcement of this revival comes, of course, from the pit. Edward Downes conducts a spacious yet firmly moulded account of the score, with some marvellous dense, dark string textures, and not one familiar moment taken for granted.

HILARY FINCH

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EDUCATION

David Jamieson on Labour plans for bright youngsters and right, Doug McAvoy questions educational strategy

Gifted and young: we could do better

I know of no country other than Britain that has in its language pejorative words such as "boffin" and "egghead" to describe the gifted and very able. In Britain, attitudes towards high achievement in education are often negative. A political climate needs to be developed that raises our expectations of educational achievement in all children, including the gifted. All schools should seek to create an atmosphere in which to excel is not only acceptable but desirable.

A cultural environment in which ridicule and discouragement is meted out to those of high intellectual ability must be challenged. The education of gifted children should be seen within the wider context of raising educational standards for all children.

Britain survives economically on

innovation, innovation and development. These abilities are vital if we are to compete and survive in the global marketplace of the 21st century. The gifted children of today are most likely to be at tomorrow's cutting edge of economic success. Their needs must be met if Britain is to become a leading and competitive progressive economy after the millennium. The Conservatives have resorted to the simplistic devices of selection and the Assisted Places Scheme as methods of tackling the education of gifted children. Labour intends to offer every child the best start in life and to end the existing culture of complacency.

The issue of provision for gifted children is based on the ethos of equality of opportunity. Labour is convinced that the state sector has a duty and responsibility to provide an appropriate education for all children, including the gifted. Parents with gifted children should not feel any need to put their child through independent schooling.

In general, gifted children are defined as the top 2 to 3 per cent of children. Gifted children possess an unusually advanced intellectual or performance ability, with an outstanding ability in general or academic intelligence, creative thinking, mechanical or athletic ability, interpersonal or intrapersonal skills or visual or performing arts.

It is wrong to suppose that the gifted child will fully develop his or her talents regardless of any special educational provision. Gifted children require assistance, of differing kinds, if their full potential is to be realised. I believe that there are a number of realistic proposals to address the pressing need to attend to the education of the gifted.

After consultation, all local education authorities (LEAs) should draw up and implement a policy on the needs of gifted children. Similarly, all schools should have a stated policy on provision for gifted children and, where appropriate, should draw up a written policy on provision for gifted children in each subject. Schools must also be required to state in their prospectuses their arrangements for identifying gifted children and the provision that can be expected.

Each LEA should have at least one person designated as adviser for gifted children and each school should have a nominated teacher to act as the co-ordinator for its policy on gifted children, and the associated programmes and provision within the school. Teacher-training courses should provide a specified minimum amount of time within the course for the identification of, and provision for, gifted children. A policy on the education provision for gifted children should be realistic and aimed at the average teacher, teaching in the average school.

Accelerated learning, which Tony Blair and David Blunkett support, is a useful strategy that can take a number of flexible forms, such as movement up by years or placement in higher group in a specific subject. However, gifted children should be given appropriate peer-group placement and groupings of gifted children can provide the social skills, competition and teamwork that gifted children need to develop their potential. There should still be procedures to ensure that such groups are not isolated from the normal school environment.

Extension classes could take place at lunchtime, on Saturday mornings or any other appropriate time and could make use of longer-term projects that do not have to fit within the restrictions of the normal school timetable. It is important to follow an open-door policy and apply it during these extra study periods. There is evidence that such classes can contribute to the general raising of standards, performance and expectations in the school as a whole, especially in the top 10 per cent of ability.

There is a need for a standard recognition of degree credits to enable gifted children to undertake part of a degree before going on to university to complete it. Thus a form of credit bank could be founded to enable gifted children to remain within their own age group yet achieve a base from which to springboard to higher education.

Last year I visited Monkseaton Community High School in Whitley Bay near Newcastle to see a project in which ten sixth-formers at the school had embarked on an Open University maths foundation course. At the end of the year, all of them passed, five winning distinctions. The students learnt about self-motivation, unsupervised study and personal organisation — qualities that will stand them in good stead in higher education.

Extracurricular courses, clubs and competitions, operating with local branches of gifted children organisations, local universities or colleges, or subject-based professional associations, should be encouraged. The use of older pupils or adults as mentors (under adequate and ultimate teacher supervision) could help to develop their skills and knowledge. Gifted children need to acquire empathy with and insight into children from a broad spectrum of abilities and interests. Comprehensive schools that develop and nurture a specialisation, for example in technology, science or music, should be assisted, on the basis that they remain non-selective.

Labour envisages a new Teachers' Centre as part of the new university industry on the Internet designed to provide teachers with the materials and advice that will enable them to raise standards and teach to the best of their ability. We will enable schools to make the most of information technology and all schools should be cabled up to the information superhighway. Internet relay talk could provide gifted children with access to tuition and experts outside their own schools without the need to travel. There could be greater co-operation and association with, and possibly integration of, the national (and international) organisations that exist for gifted children to assist with the formulation and development of LEA and school policy on gifted children.

Britain must rise to the challenge set by countries such as Korea and Singapore and aspire to the highest level. Remoulding British attitudes to education and developing the provision for gifted children could play a central role in this and will also give us a head start over our European competitors.

During the Industrial Revolution, Britain relied upon innovation, enterprise, investment, capital, machines and building to succeed. As we enter the new century the neglect and loss of such talent would severely hinder our country's development. We need to invest in the skills and talents of our people. That is why it is vital that we give the special needs of our gifted children a high priority.

David Jamieson is Labour MP for Plymouth Devonport and a former vice-principal of a community college. Labour's discussion document, *The Education of Gifted Children*, is available from David Jamieson, MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.



Sufiah Yusof was educated at home and is on her way to St Hilda's College, Oxford, at the age of 12

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Doing arithmetic for a reading and writing plan

A national approach to literacy needs to be practical

Any government that places literacy at the heart of its educational strategy must be on the right track. While the recent Labour initiative deserves support, I hope the party's task group understands the conditions needed for its success.

Schools with similar pupil intakes may have differences in performance, but no easy assumptions should be made, because they can be converted into ill-targeted blame, demoralising rather than motivating teachers. Next week's publication of primary school league tables will be a classic example of this. It is far better to look at the practical steps needed to enable the initiative to work.

The Government's National Literacy Project (NLP) involves a small number of local education authorities and schools. Within it, a national framework for teaching literacy has been developed, but it is at a pilot stage. The project has a waiting list of schools wanting to participate, indicating teacher enthusiasm. However, it would be a mistake to assume that the project can simply be imposed on schools, with existing training days automatically reallocated to literacy training. Imposition caused serious problems in the past, as we saw with the national curriculum. Equally, the displacement of the training and other work taking place on those days, regardless of the needs of individual schools, could trigger more problems than solutions.

One of the many mistakes behind the introduction of the national curriculum was that schools received the subject orders and were simply expected to get on with it. Adequate in-service training was never made available. The NLP has the potential for real education authority and school involvement in a "bottom up" approach to developing literacy. A model capable of harnessing teachers' enthusiasm should involve the extension of properly funded literacy centres to all education authorities. As well as providing training, the centres would be seen both as a resource and as places where new initiatives could be developed by teachers themselves.

Neither the introduction of the old national curriculum nor the revised one was costed. The effects of this mistake were charted for the National Union of Teachers in 1991 by Coopers & Lybrand, which noted that "the balance of the curriculum but would need the flexibility to devote as much time to the core as they felt necessary."

The Government must halt worsening teacher-pupil ratios. Leicester University's research for the NUT on links between class size and pupil achievement found that excessive overall class sizes limited the ability of schools to enable all children to spend part of their school day in small groups, an essential prerequisite for the teaching of literacy.

Labour has a chance. If in government, to establish a partnership with schools through its literacy initiative. Labour should take it.

Doug McAvoy is general secretary of the National Union of Teachers.



McAvoy: does Labour understand?

Your guide to all the guides

What's the best source of information on independent schools? Susan Elkin sifts through the publications

Guides to independent schools are big business. Any prospective parent — especially a first-time "consumer" who may not know much about private education — is likely to encounter *The Gabbitis Guide to Independent Schools* (£11.99), *Hobsons Guide to Independent Boarding Schools* (£9.95), *Independent Schools of the United Kingdom* (£9.95) and the *Independent Schools Yearbook* (£24), to mention just a few. There are also numerous guides and supplements published by — or in connection with — magazines and newspapers.

How do you distil the truth from the hype? The answer is to make a few educated guesses, or discreet inquiries about how the guide's contents have been assembled, how it has been financed and who will profit from it. Bear in mind that many guides are actually quite expensive.

There are two types of guides. One contains a series of advertising and promotional articles about schools and issues related to them. These have been written by the schools as part of their marketing strategy.

The second type of guide is produced independently.

The glossy colour *Hobsons Guide to Independent Boarding Schools*, for example, falls into the first category. Even Eton College has an advertisement in it (at £875 for a half-page). Some schools — for example, Merchant Taylors' School, in the 1996-97 edition — opt for a full-page "case study" of a past pupil instead of, or as well as, a half or full-page school "profile".

The name and crest of Mill Hill School Foundation elegantly decorates a laminated plastic bookmark attached to



Boys at Eton College: but how do "first-time" parents find out what Eton is really like?

the *Hobsons Guide* with a tasteful cream ribbon in Prussian blue. I doubt that Mill Hill was accorded this privilege without paying for it. Of course, there is nothing wrong with any of this, but prospective parents need to be aware that information may be anything but impartial.

These guides usually contain informative commentary by renowned experts in, and supporters of, independent education. The *Hobsons Guide* contains articles by Enid Castle, former Principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College, and by Graeme Searle,

the National Director of Independent Schools Careers Organisation (ISCO).

Most of these guides also publish full listings and basic information about the schools in their category — at no charge to the school. The *Gabbitis Guide to Independent Education*, whose third edition has just been published by Kogan Page, lists schools by area. As with *Hobsons*, the more detailed accounts of certain schools which occupy about half of this 600-page book are paid for (at more than £1,000 each) by the schools themselves, so

disinterest is thin on the ground. That is not, however, to belittle the usefulness of independent schooling, addresses of education organisations and comprehensive data about available scholarships and other details that *Gabbitis* amply provides.

The second type of school guide is based on an inspection or appraisal of the school by an outsider, for which the schools pay nothing. One example is *The Daily Telegraph Schools Guide*, whose third edition is due out later this year. The "inspectors" are

retired heads, teachers, education journalists and school governors.

Hundreds of schools, including some in the maintained sector, are assessed. But the approach is haphazard. Not every school is included. How are they chosen? Furthermore, the assessment is the potentially offbeat opinion of a single person who spent one day or less at the school. It probably tells you more, however, than a self-promoting piece written by the school's publicity department.

The *Telegraph* guide's second edition cost £11.99.

The *Sunday Times* sponsors the 80-page *The Equitable Schools' Book* (£15.99), described in *The Sunday Telegraph* as "the *Wissen* of the fee-paying circuit". The 520 reports, which are informative but never critical, cover a larger slice of the sector than most guides, although inevitably it is still selective.

Some newspapers — *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, for example — publish free school supplements. From time to time these give fairly impartial, factual information about independent schools and are good for the basics.

The Independent Schools Information Service (ISIS) produces booklets which list schools on a regional basis and there is now a comprehensive CD-Rom, also from ISIS.

Probably the most useful guide is the no-frills *Independent Schools Yearbook*, which you will almost certainly find sitting in your local public reference library. It lists the 1,500 schools (for pupils aged three to 18) who are members of the five independent school associations. Fees and scholarship availability are detailed and there is a staff list for each school.

Er, Mummy, you're not coming with me, are you?

WHEN John Coleman, director of the Trust for the Study of Adolescence, accompanied his son to a university interview, his off-spring gave strict instructions on how to dress: no loud ties, no swanky suits, no scruffy jeans — nothing embarrassing.

Thus was trodden the fine line between parent as morale-boosting, advice-giving taxi driver and parent as liability. "Should we go with them?" is a dilemma faced by many families as 17 and 18-year-olds criss-cross the country in search of a place in higher education.

Dr Coleman thinks the cue should come from the child. "Talk it over beforehand," he says. "Try to feel your way on whether they want the support of your presence or would feel cramped by it. They might be worrying about your feelings, so if they say 'It's up to you, Mum', Mum probably should not go."

"If you do go, have a good look around and perhaps investigate some of the things your child may not have thought about, such as the location; it might be too isolated for them. What parents must not do is let their own memories and experiences colour their approach. It is difficult to come up to date but university is very different today."

The other parental sin is to push in. Keep in the background; do not try to impress tutors. You'll only make the child nervous."

Allan Johnson, the chair-

man of the Higher Education Liaison Officers' Association, says: "Even the maximum grant will probably cover less than 50 per cent of the total cost, so parents may have to stump up a significant amount and they are very concerned about their investment."

"They are also concerned about their child's career prospects at the end of a course."

"Another reason is that the students experience something of college life, and they could not do that if Mum and Dad were in a hotel in town and they had to keep going back there."

Sarah White, 23, president of the University of London Students Union, says: "It's best if families can go on open days, or tour the place separately. It's easier to find out what you really want to know if your parents are not there. You might want to ask the undergraduates who are doing the tour whether they like it or what the staff are like."

"I think that there is an increasing tendency to mollycoddle children. But going to university is part of growing up and you have to rely on yourself when you get here. So perhaps going to the interview alone should be one of the first steps towards that independence. After all, you're not going to have your mother with you for the next three years."

Liz Gill

Margaret McGowan of the Advisory Centre for Education, recommends "playing it by ear". Her daughter went to an interview in Manchester with friends, but asked her mother to accompany her to Swansea. "She was a bit

nervous."

CRICKET

Sussex members urged to join Pigott's rebellion

BY SIMON WILDE

NOT many people give up a good job in order to fight for the future of an organisation from which they were peremptorily sacked four years ago, but that is what Tony Pigott has done. He tendered his resignation as Surrey's assistant coach and second XI captain last week to attempt to revitalise Sussex, a club to which he gave 16 years of dedicated service and which is now in turmoil.

The Sussex committee has long been accused of mishandling players, never more so than in recent months, during which six capped players — Wells, Salisbury, Giddins, Law, Speight and Hall — have gone for various reasons, but it may come to regret the departure of Pigott, who enjoyed three good years with Surrey after leaving Sussex.

Pigott is demanding the wholesale resignation of the committee and has called an extraordinary general meeting to try to bring this about, although it may not come to that; the committee met last night to discuss his action and Alan Caffyn, the chairman, may announce his resignation today.

Pigott, who runs a cricket management company that handles Alec Stewart, Graham Thorpe and Mark Ramprakash, has an emotional attachment to Sussex cricket dating back to his boyhood, when he worshipped Ted Dexter and John Snow from the boundary at Hove.

His revolutionary fervour has been fanned by what happened after he arrived at Surrey, where members, angered by years of underachievement, demanded — and got — changes in management personnel and were rewarded last year with the

club's first trophy in 14 years. Pigott, 38, recently addressed a meeting of the Sussex Cricket Society and said that if the members cared about Sussex they, too, should "rise up".

Pigott said his words met with a favourable response and, on Tuesday, Richard Barrow resigned from the committee "after wrestling with my conscience for some time" — in protest at the lack of management and poor communication, complaints that lie at the heart of Pigott's campaign. As an example, Pigott cites the treatment of Wells, who was dismissed as captain last October and left for Kent. Wells had received an assurance that he would be reappointed, but Barrow said this was not mentioned at the meeting at which he was sacked.

Wells has since been singled out for criticism by Caffyn, prompting one recently departed player to use the word "scapegoat". "Nobody is accepting the blame for what is happening," Pigott said. "Everyone seems to be more concerned with their own position than with the club itself."

"Such things will not attract players and the youngsters who are coming through will not stay if the side is neither winning nor moving forward. Which sponsors will want to be associated with Sussex? Who will want to invest in the redevelopment of the Hove ground?"

Following Barrow's departure, four of the nine places on the committee now need to be filled after the annual meeting later this month, but Pigott, though he seeks a seat, does not want cosmetic changes, and neither does Barrow.

"Sussex cannot go on as they are," Barrow said. "The current management style is clearly not working and a dynamic approach is imperative for the club's prosperity. It is essential that the remaining committee members meet with Tony prior to the AGM... the last thing we want to promote is public wrangling."



Wells, above, sacked as captain, accepted an offer to join Kent while, below, from left, Law (Essex), Speight (Durham) and Salisbury (Surrey) also moved



Law, Speight and Salisbury also moved to other clubs.

Wells has since been singled out for criticism by Caffyn, prompting one recently departed player to use the word "scapegoat".

"Such things will not attract players and the youngsters who are coming through will not stay if the side is neither winning nor moving forward. Which sponsors will want to be associated with Sussex? Who will want to invest in the redevelopment of the Hove ground?"

SPORTS LETTERS

Referees need time to consider

From Mr Steven Dunkey

Sir, We all know it wasn't a penalty and suspect that, the instant after he gave it to Chelsea against Leicester City, Mike Reed, the referee, realised it wasn't one either. The problem was, and always is in such circumstances, that once he had awarded the penalty, Reed could not, dare not, alter his decision.

There was no going back. Chelsea took the spot kick, scored and one goal won the tie. Victory without honour was written all over the Chelsea players' faces, defeat by official mugging was on the faces of those in the Leicester camp. Neutrals despaired that the laws of the game so implemented had failed at the most extreme of moments when best quality decision-making is demanded. And that is all Reed had, an extreme moment in which to decide, with no time to consider.

I propose the following:

1. The referee (or referee's assistant) sees an offence that might give rise to a penalty award (currently he would give a penalty instantly).
2. The referee blows his whistle and stops play, in response to what he has witnessed.
3. By use of a clear, purpose-designed arm signal the referee indicates to players and spectators that a penalty award is under consideration.
4. The referee and both assistants must immediately confer as to whether, based on the evidence, a penalty award is justified or not.
5. Having considered the matter himself, and conferred with his assistants, the referee himself makes the decision as to a penalty award or not.
6. If a penalty is awarded, the kick is taken in the usual way. If there is no penalty, the

referee resumes play in a way he deems appropriate.

7. Scrap the obstruction offence within the penalty area. The nature of the officials' conference will depend on the clarity of the event giving rise to a penalty award being considered; for instance, hand ball on the goalline by a defender to prevent a goal may be so blatant as to merit only a moment's conference, whereas a less clear offence might require more time.

Crucially, a conference between the three officials will give the referee time to consider, where at present there is no, or insufficient, time even to reconsider. Players and spectators will feel that all has been done to ensure fairer decision-making.

Yours sincerely,

STEVEN DUNKEY,

14 Glamis Drive,

Stone, Staffordshire.

From Mr G. I. Williams

Sir, I am becoming increasingly concerned with the poor standard of refereeing in the Football League.

It would appear that the role of the assistant referee is merely to copy the signals of the referee, rather than to assist him by indicating when misconduct or other incident has occurred out of the vision of the referee.

While much of the criticism referees receive during a match is based on heat-of-the-moment bias from supporters, there does not seem to be a match that passes without some refereeing faux pas.

Although I accept that referees, like all human beings, are fallible, mistakes are made all too frequently, especially over offside, fouls and misconduct.

Yours faithfully,

G. I. WILLIAMS,

The House,

St Dunstan's College, SE6.

Rowell tactics questionable

From Mr Simon Goldberg

Sir, In reporting France's stunning victory over England (March 3), both David Hands and David Miller question Jack Rowell's failure to make tactical substitutions in the second half of the game.

Rowell's responses to similar questioning at the post-match press conference belie his astuteness as a rugby coach and successful businessman. The comment that "substitution is fraught with danger" may be true as a generalisation but not in the circumstances applying at the time. France's tactical substitutions were both risky but injected fresh pairs of legs which transformed the team's effort.

Rowell also said: "I didn't want to disrupt what was going on." What was going on was that England were back-peddalling so much that it is difficult to envisage how substitutions could have adversely affected the situation. The introduction of a fresh scrum half and one of the best centres in the British Isles could have saved the game.

A closer analysis of Rowell's answers leads one to conclude that his responses are born not from tactical logic but from his uneasy and over-defensive relations with the media.

Yours etc,

SIMON GOLDBERG,

18 Harcombe Road, N16.

From Mr Matthew Farmer

Sir, Jack Rowell should be roundly applauded for keeping alive the spirit of amateurism in rugby. How easy it would have been for him to seek to grind French noses into the dust by bringing on Ben Clarke, Jeremy Guscott and Austin Healey. How boring it would have been to see another runaway result like the one against Ireland. By not making substitutions to counter the fresh legs brought on by the French, it produced a far closer and more exciting game. Vive la Corinthian Spirit — and well played France!

Yours etc,

MATTHEW FARMER,

99 Trinity Court,

Grays Inn Road, WC1.

Sports Letters may be sent by fax to 0171-762 5211.

Kent choose Wright

JOHN WRIGHT, the former New Zealand opening batsman and captain, who became one of the most popular and respected cricketers in England during his 12 seasons with Derbyshire, is set to return to the county game as Kent coach (Pat Gibson writes).

Wright, 42, is expected to be named today to succeed Daryl Foster, the West Australian who retired in January for personal and family reasons after five years as coach and cricket manager at Canterbury.

Wright, a determined left-hander renowned for his powers of concentration, first came to England in 1976 when he played for Kent second XI, but it was Derbyshire who signed him on a special registration. For them, he scored more than 1,000 runs in a season on six occasions.

He made his Test debut at Wellington in 1978 when New Zealand beat England for the first time. When he retired in 1993, he had scored more than 25,000 runs, 5,334 of them in his 82 Tests, in which he made 12 centuries.



Giddins dismissed

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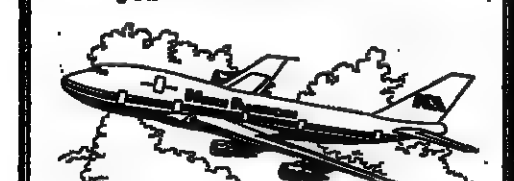
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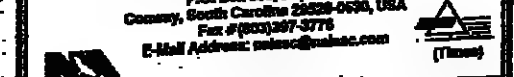
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RACING: PRENDERGAST CONVINCED RISING STAR CAN UPSET ESTABLISHED ORDER



I'm Supposin demonstrates the aptitude for accurate hurdling which underlines Prendergast's confidence in his championship prospects

I'm Supposin enters argument

By OUR IRISH RACING CORRESPONDENT

KEVIN PRENDERGAST can be relied upon to speak his mind. It is an admirable trait, all the more so when his opinions could point back to the Champion Hurdle winner.

Since I'm Supposin, formerly useful on the flat, won the first of his two hurdle races, the 6-year-old classic-winning trainer from the Curragh has insisted that the five-year-old is potentially championship class.

Such confidence can wane as the big day nears, but not Prendergast's. Asked what he was afraid of in the Champion Hurdle, Prendergast replied: "Interference."

He laughed when reminded

of it, but remains convinced of his horse's chance. "It is simple. If we get him to Cheltenham in one piece, he is a good thing," he said.

Such a statement could be taken with several helpings of salt were Prendergast not one of the most consistently successful Irish trainers of the last 30 years. Prendergast has maintained the family's classic-winning tradition, started by his father, Paddy, with the likes of the 2,000 Guineas winner, Nebbiolo, Arctic Royale and, last year, Oscar Schindler. But he is no speed-fixated flat trainer who has just discovered National Hunt racing's more rustic charms.

In 1967 he trained Talgo Abess to be placed third in the Champion Hurdle, and, from a handful of infrequent festi-



val runners, produced prominent King to finish third in the 1976 Triumph Hurdle.

"When I've been at Cheltenham it's been great, but I rarely train jumpers," Prendergast, who also saddles Our Bid in the Festival Bumper, said before remembering his

riding days as one of Ireland's best amateurs. "There's nothing else to bump for amateurs then, and I was far too careful to ride in the hunters' class."

Charlie Swan will be in charge of I'm Supposin on Tuesday and Prendergast has no doubt his inexperienced horse's jumping will cope with the expected fast pace. "He has been a natural from day one. Alderbrook won a Champion Hurdle with only one previous run and this fellow is in the same mould, only bigger. The faster they go, the better. It will suit him because of his high cruising speed," he said.

"This is a horse who has been only 1½ lengths by Pilsudski last year. Take Oscar Schindler out of the Irish Leger and I'm Supposin has only been beaten four lengths

by an Oaks winner [Key Change]. There's nothing else in the Champion Hurdle capable of doing that."

With the connections of Collier Bay, Relkeel and Space Trucker anxiously looking to the skies for different varieties of help, Prendergast is unconcerned about the ground. On hard going last summer, I'm Supposin won the Ulster Derby and, in his latest race, readily handled bad ground to beat the highly rated novice, Alderbrook and Royal Gait.

The 1992 champion, showed what a novice, battle-hardened from the flat, can do if he has a natural aptitude for hurdling. Backers will soon know if I'm Supposin's performance will speak as loudly as his trainer's belief in him.

SANDOWN PARK

2.00 Otto E Mezzo 3.45 Emerald Statement
2.35 Eulogy 4.15 Brackenfield
3.10 Act The Wag 4.45 MIRADOR (nap)

Carl Evans; 4.15 Brackenfield.

GOING: GOOD TOTE JACKPOT MEETING SIS

2.00 SANDOWN PARK NOVICES HURDLE

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101 11190 SHAMROCK 20 (D.F.) (A. McEvoy) 11-11-13. J. McEvoy 90
102 12122 RUSSELL PURSUIT 105 (B.F.) (A. McEvoy) 11-11-13. J. McEvoy 90
103 12123 RUSSELL PURSUIT 105 (B.F.) (A. McEvoy) 11-11-13. J. McEvoy 90
104 12124 RUSSELL PURSUIT 105 (B.F.) (A. McEvoy) 11-11-13. J. McEvoy 90
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691-692, 693-694, 695-696, 697-698, 699-700, 701-702, 703-704, 705-706, 707-708, 709-710, 711-712, 713-714, 715-716, 717-718, 719-720, 721-722, 723-724, 725-726, 727-728, 729-730, 731-732, 733-734, 735-736, 737-738, 739-740, 741-742, 743-744, 745-746, 747-748, 749-750, 751-752, 753-754, 755-756, 757-758, 759-760, 761-762, 763-764, 765-766, 767-768, 769-770, 771-772, 773-774, 775-776, 777-778, 779-780, 781-782, 783-784, 785-786, 787-788, 789-790, 791-792, 793-794, 795-796, 797-798, 799-800, 801-802, 803-804, 805-806, 807-808, 809-810, 811-812, 813-814, 815-816, 817-818, 819-820, 821-822, 823-824, 825-826, 827-828, 829-830, 831-832, 833-834, 835-836, 837-838, 839-840, 841-842, 843-844, 845-846, 847-848, 849-850, 851-852, 853-854, 855-856, 857-858, 859-860, 861-862, 863-864, 865-866, 867-868, 869-870, 871-872, 873-874, 875-876, 877-878, 879-880, 881-882, 883-884, 885-886, 887-888, 889-890, 891-892, 893-894, 895-896, 897-898, 899-900, 901-902, 903-904, 905-906, 907-908, 909-910, 911-912, 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MOTOR RACING

Old rivals and new faces, but Williams still team to beat

They say it is going to be a fine season, this year ahead in Formula One, more evenly contested, perhaps, with more elements of the unexpected. Yesterday, before the cars had even taken to the track, it got off to the best of all possible starts. Sentimentality, humour and an oddly touching rapprochement between old enemies, the first press conference here at Albert Park had it all.

It started with Michael Schumacher, that cold-blooded racing machine, talking about the recent birth of his first child, a baby daughter called Gina Maria, in terms so candid and open that the shield of invulnerability that always appears to cloak him seemed to be melting away in front of our eyes.

"Being there when the little one came," he said, "was the best moment of all the experiences I have had in my life. So many people try to explain what it will feel like to be a father, but you understand nothing until the moment when you become a father yourself. In the hospital, all the sisters were trying to explain things to me about the way to hold her and showing me how to do things with her, but I just wanted to hold her myself. It is an amazing thing which you do not expect will happen to you and you feel it so strongly."

Alongside him on the plat-

OLIVER HOLT



form, Damon Hill smiled at the mellowing of his great adversary. He laughed when Schumacher was asked if he felt sorry for Hill now that the new world champion is about to be consigned to the role of a bit-part player in the fight for his title.

The Englishman offered Schumacher a handkerchief to wipe away the tears the question implied, but Schumacher had already thought of a solution to the dissolution of their three-year rivalry before the opening practice sessions of the season today. "I have organised myself a picture to put on the steering wheel," he said.

Then someone took a leap of faith and asked Schumacher if, perhaps, he and Hill might even become friends. "How can we become friends in a world like this?" Schumacher said. "Where people ask us

questions all the time and when things are blown up between us. Let's turn it around and put it this way. We are not enemies any more."

Before they descended from the stage, Hill signed his part of the treaty, too, rationalising away the enmity that used to exist by comparing them to two boxers going into a ring, having to motivate themselves to hurt the other.

"A rival is anyone who is there in competition with you," Hill said, "and if there is just one guy between you and what you have been trying to achieve, the rivalry is distilled into one person. It is not a personal thing. It is just born out of the intensity of the desire to win."

Outside, in the sunshine of the Australian autumn, other things had changed, too, since last season. The name "Prost" was written above one of the garage doors to signal the dawn of the Frenchman's new team and the end of Ligier. "Stewart" made its first appearance, too.

At McLaren-Mercedes, gleaming silver cars, designed to evoke the spirit of the old Mercedes "Silver Arrows", sat proudly on their stands, the traditional red and white livery of the Marlboro dominated colour scheme that decorated the cars of Ayrton Senna, a thing of the past.

Outside the Williams camp, German journalists mingled with the English and the Canadians, keen to establish themselves with Heinz-Harald Frentzen's new team and, further up the pit lane, the Japanese tyre company, Bridgestone, put the final touches to their preparations to equip five teams and challenge the monopoly of Goodyear.

In wet races, in particular, their excellence is expected to cause some surprising results.

If some things change in Formula One, some things remain the same. Jacques Villeneuve, the new Williams team leader, has inherited the mantle of favourite that has been thrust on his predecessors so often throughout this decade, and did not attempt to deny that he was the man to beat. With all Williams' problems — their ongoing prosecution for the manslaughter of Senna, the loss of their brilliant designer, Adrian Newey, and the furor surrounding their sacking of Hill — the chasing pack may get closer to



Villeneuve, the championship favourite, checks his Williams car yesterday

them this year, but it is unlikely that they will get close enough.

Villeneuve topped most of the times in pre-season testing and has even hinted that the car was not even running to its full potential. "I think Williams is the favourite," he said, "and the fact that I have been with the team a year should benefit me the most. As a driver, you always think you are the best and if you do not believe that, how can you expect a team and their sponsors to believe it when they are thinking of signing you?"

Since it became evident that Hill would be taken out of the championship equation because of his move to Arrows, most have assumed that the race for the title this year would be a straight fight between Villeneuve and Schumacher. Yesterday, though, the German added more weight to the theory that others might be involved, too. Ferrari, searching for their

first drivers' championship for 18 years, have not made the advances they had hoped for during the winter and, even though Schumacher said he hoped to be fighting for the title by the end of the year, may find themselves behind not just Williams, but also Benetton and McLaren when the grid for the race on Sunday is decided tomorrow.

Both Hill and Nigel Mansell, the former British world champion, have suggested Berger, the oldest driver in grand prix racing this year, as a surprise contender for the title. His team-mate, Jean Alesi, and the McLaren drivers, David Coulthard and

Mika Hakkinen, may also win races.

Farther down the grid, there is a refreshing wealth of talented young drivers clamouring for success, a healthy alternative to the sponsor-rich dross that often occupies places in the middle of the field. Both Giancarlo Fisichella, at Jordan, and Jan Magnussen, at Stewart, could be world champions of the future.

Yesterday, though, belonged to the world champions of the past, to the memories of the great rivalry between Hill and Schumacher, to happy endings on the eve of new beginnings.

London University to lead flotilla

MORE than 2,000 competitors are racing in the 57th Women's Eights Head on Saturday (Mike Rosewell writes). London University, who have beaten the Oxford and Cambridge women's boat race crews in the past fortnight and who have six of their crew on trial for Great Britain, will lead off the 242-crew flotilla from Mortlake to Putney. Mike Spracklen, in his new post as national women's coach, is, unlike his predecessor, Bill Mason, allowing squad members to race in their club crews.

Apart from London University, squad members are found in the Tideway Scullers crew, starting third, and notably the Thames crew, starting fourth, which includes five members of the women's team at the Atlanta Olympic Games.

Kirsten bowling out

CRICKET: Peter Kirsten, the former South Africa Test batsman, will make his final first-class appearance in the game between Border and the touring Australians which starts today. Kirsten, 41, has enjoyed a career spanning 25 years, some of it spent with Derbyshire, for whom he made 228 against Somerset in 1981. He exceeded that score by scoring 271 for Border against Northern Transvaal in 1994 to become the first South African batsman to score eight double centuries. He has a career-average of 44.63 and has made 57 three-figure scores.

Wales date for Harvey

RUGBY UNION: Ben Harvey, who has helped Brunel University College to the final of the British Universities championship, will play at scrum half for England against Wales in a student international at Pontypriod on March 14.

ENGLAND STUDENTS: J. Patten (Essex), B. Johnson (RMC, Shrewsbury), F. Walters (Essex), M. Denney (Essex), M. Singer (Cambridge), M. Jones (Aston), B. Harvey (Brunel UC), M. Long (Northampton), J. Dickin (Essex), A. Reuben (Essex), T. Earnshaw (Cambridge), C. Webb (JWIC), M. Mills (Sheffield, Hallam), K. Yates (Bradford), R. Beattie (Northampton).

McColgan chases record

ATHLETICS: Liz McColgan will attempt a record-breaking fourth victory in the BUPA Great North Run on September 14. McColgan, winner of her first title in 1992 when the event incorporated the world half-marathon championship and again for the past two years, is out to improve on the record of Liza Ondieki. The Australian's three victories in the 1990s were not in successive years and McColgan is convinced she can complete a hat-trick.

Banbury warm-up

LACROSSE: The England squad for the world championships in Japan next month will take part in an international tournament at Banbury this weekend, when five of those who narrowly missed selection — Rachana Slesky, Caroline Cade, Nicky Farman, Emily Ormerod and Vicky Penn — will try to make a point which they play in a President's team, including a number of former internationals, against England on Sunday.

Lincoln make progress

ROWING: There was little movement by the leading crews in the men's and women's top divisions on the second day of Oxford University Torpids on the Isis yesterday. The first six crews in the men's first division rode over. Lincoln and Oriel II were the only colleges to progress. Christ Church have dropped four places over the two days, as have Pembroke, who were bumped by University and Lady Margaret Hall in the women's first division.

DRIVERS AND TEAMS

No	Driver	Team	Points
1	Damon Hill (GB)	Danka Arrows Yamaha	1,97
2	Pedro Diniz (Br)	Danka Arrows Yamaha	15,2
3	Jacques Villeneuve (Can)	Prost	12,7
4	Heinz-Harald Frentzen (Ger)	Prost	12,7
5	Michael Schumacher (Ger)	Ferrari Marlboro	3,59
6	Eddie Irvine (GB)	Ferrari Marlboro	10,11
7	Jean Alesi (Fr)	Mid Seven Benetton Renault	4,47
8	Gerhard Berger (Austria)	Mid Seven Benetton Renault	0,21
9	Mika Hakkinen (Fin)	West McLaren Mercedes	5,31
10	David Coulthard (GB)	West McLaren Mercedes	7,18
11	Ralf Schumacher (Ger)	B&W Total Jordan Peugeot	—
12	Giancarlo Fisichella (It)	B&W Total Jordan Peugeot	—
13	Oliver Panis (Fr)	Ligier Gauloises	0,13
14	Shinji Nakano (Jpn)	Ligier Gauloises	14,4
15	Johnny Herbert (GB)	Red Bull Sauber Petronas	—
16	Nicola Larini (It)	Red Bull Sauber Petronas	—
17	Jos Verstappen (Hol)	Tyrrell	18,5
18	Mika Salo (Fin)	Tyrrell	—
19	Ukyo Katayama (Japan)	Minardi	—
20	Jarno Trulli (It)	Minardi	—
21	Rubens Barrichello (Br)	Stewart Ford	5,14
22	Jan Magnussen (Den)	Stewart Ford	—
23	Ricardo Rosset (Br)	Motorcard Lola	—
24	Vincenzo Sospiri (It)	Motorcard Lola	—

□ Race starts at 12.30pm. Drivers' standings. Martin Brundle (1), B. is not racing.

March 9: Australia (Melbourne)
March 30: Brazil (Interlagos)
April 12: Argentina (Buenos Aires)
April 27: San Marino (Imola)
May 11: Monaco (Monte Carlo)
May 25: Spain (Barcelona)
June 15: Canada (Montreal)
June 29: France (Magny Cours)
July 12: Britain (Silverstone)

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN,
BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

Today's hand illustrates another point in slam bidding. It was played in the Macallan Camrose international match between Scotland and England, in December last year.

AKK4
Q884
K
Q888

West
1C
2H
3H
Pass

After both defenders followed to a round of trumps, I laid the hand down at trick three, sheepishly claiming thirteen tricks.

There are some instructive points in the auction. The first is whether I should force with Two Hearts over the opening bid of One Club. It often eases the auction to force, but here I was planning to bid diamonds later in a natural sense, to find out more about the hand. That is not possible after starting with Two Hearts — the modern style is that you don't force with a two-suiter (unless one of the suits has been opened by your partner). Thus after a force any subsequent diamond bid would be a cue-bid.

My Three Diamonds over Senior's raise to Two Hearts was, in the first instance, a "trial" bid. That is, it showed length in diamonds and asked

West to re-evaluate his hand for game purposes.

West's hand became strong when he discovered I had a diamond suit, and so he jumped to game. But what he should have done was bid Three Spades on the way there. As that already commits East-West to Four Hearts, it is a cue-bid. Sometimes it is wrong to make these bids, as it helps the opposition find the best defence against a doubtful game. But here, Senior's hand was so powerful that I think he could have afforded it. As it was, I couldn't bid over Four Hearts — after all, reverse West's black suits and Five Hearts may go down. If Senior had bid Three Spades, we might have reached Seven Hearts, e.g.

West
1C
2H
3H
4D (1)
5S (1)
7H

All bids marked (1) are cue-bids. After Five Spades East can tell that West has ace-king of spades and king of diamonds, and provided West has at least eight cards in hearts and clubs East can see that there will be no spade loser. Fanciful I suppose, but at any rate we would have bid Six Hearts.

□ Robert Sheehan writes on bridge Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

By Philip Howard

CAMISARDS
a. French Protestants
b. Camisoles
c. A breed of duck

MABINOOGION
a. An ogre
b. Celtic stories
c. The President of Iceland

DORNICK
a. A Doric column
b. Stout linen
c. A door-lock
QUIDDISTS
a. Tobacco chewers
b. American sectarians
c. Anti-Euro fanatics

Answers on page 46

KEENE on CHESS

By RAYMOND KEENE,
CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Lords v Commons

The annual match between the House of Lords and the House of Commons held at Simpson's-in-the-Strand resulted in a clear victory, 7½-4½ for the Commons. Victories for the Lords were notched up by Lord Winston and Lord Rennell, while the Commons winners were Nigel Griffiths, Bob Alnsworth, Jeremy Hanley and Michael Stern.

White: Lord Kilbracken
Black: Nigel Griffiths MP

Lords v Commons, March 1997

Queen's Pawn Game	
1 d4	d5
2 f4	Nc6
3 Nf3	Bg4
4 e3	af6
5 Nc3	Nf6
6 Bc3	Bxf3
7 N3	Bxf3
8 Qd3	Bb4
9 a3	Bxc3+
10 bxc3	O-O
11 Bc2	g6
12 O-O-O	Qc6
13 Kc2	Rf6
14 e4	Na7
15 e5	Qb6+
16 Ka1	Nd7
17 Rb1	Qc6
18 h4	Nb6
19 Rb3	Na4
20 h5	h6
21 h6g6	Od7
22 Qh3	h6g6
23 Bg6	Kf7
24 Qh8+	Kf7
25 Rf7+	Kf8
26 Qg7	Qg7
27 Rg7	Rf8
28 Rg7	Kf7
29 Rf7+	Ke7
30 c4	Qxc4

White missed a golden opportunity to win the game with a flourish on move 22. He could have played 22 Rxf7 Kxf7, 23 Qh5 (Black's pawn is pinned) 24 Qg8, 24 Qxg8 Kxh8, 25 Qh7 mate.

Another opportunity beckoned on move 26 when 26 Qx8-Kx8, 27 Rxd7 would have left White with a clear material advantage. As played, Black's king escaped from the bombardment and he emerged with a winning endgame.

The Spectator Trophy for the winning team was presented by Bruce Anderson to Michael Stern, captain of the winning side, while the new Killearn Trophy in honour of Lord Killearn who led the Lords team for many years, until his death last year, was presented jointly to Lord Winston and Nigel Griffiths who were the two top scorers in the match.

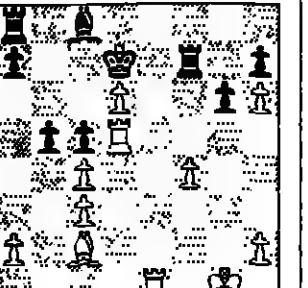
□ Raymond Keene writes on chess Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

WINNING MOVE

By Raymond Keene

White to play. This position is from the game Bouzi — Philippe, Belgium 1972. White is two pawns ahead and should win. However, his pawns are a little scattered and this could create problems. How did White bypass any difficulties with a quick combination?

Solution on page 46



A TIMES NEWSPAPERS COMPETITION

Play Fantasy Formula One

Prizes worth £40,000

There is still time to get in pole position for The Times and the Marlboro World Championship Team 1997 Formula One season which starts in Melbourne on Sunday. For the chance to win a share of our £40,000 Fantasy Formula One jackpot just choose a team of six racing drivers and six constructors from the four groups listed in the panel, below. Although the entry lines have closed for registration for Sunday's Australian Grand Prix there are plenty of points to be picked up over the season, and up to

600 points to be earned for each of six bonus races. And you can switch your fantasy team after each grand prix. Full details of the scoring system and the terms and conditions appeared in our 20-page Grand Prix supplement, published on February 24.

● You can also play Fantasy Formula One with The Sunday Times for the chance to win additional prizes.



THE PRIZES

JACKPOT: The manager with the best team score on our Fantasy Formula One leaderboard after the final race of the season, the European Grand Prix at Estoril, Portugal, on October 26, will win £25,000. Prizes of £10,000 and £5,000 will go to two runners-up.

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Follow the instructions on the entry line. You will be asked to nominate your 12 two-digit selections in turn. The order in which you register your first three drivers will be your predictions for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd finishing places for the grands prix where bonus points apply.

You will then be asked to give your Fantasy Formula One team name, your own name, address, postcode and daytime telephone number. You will receive a 10-digit PIN number as confirmation of your entry. Please keep a record of this with your team details.

MAKE 3 SELECTIONS FROM EACH OF THESE FOUR GROUPS

DRIVERS GROUP A	DRIVERS GROUP B
01 Damon Hill	07 Mika Hakkinen
02 Michael Schumacher	08 David Coulthard
03 Jacques Villeneuve	09 Rubens Barrichello
04 Eddie Irvine	10 Heinz-Harald Frentzen
05 Jean Alesi	11 Johnny Herbert
06 Gerhard Berger	12 Mika Salo

DRIVERS GROUP C

13 Olivier Panis	19 Giancarlo Fisichella
14 Jos Verstappen	20 Shinji Nakano
15 Ukyo Katayama	21 Nicola Larini
16 Pedro Diniz	22 Jarno Trulli
17 Ricardo Rosset	23 Jan Magnussen
18 Ralf Schumacher	24 Vincenzo Sospiri

CONSTRUCTORS GROUP D

25 Williams	31 Arrows
26 Ferrari	32 Sauber
27 McLaren	33 Tyrrell
28 Benetton	34 Minardi
29 Jordan	35 Stewart
30 Ligier	36 Lola

0891 calls cost 50p per minute (standard tariffs apply to +44 990 calls).

CHANGING TIMES

FOOTBALL

Injuries take gloss off welcome win by Middlesbrough

By Russell Kempson

RELEGATION. The mere mention of the word sends a shiver down the spines of those entrenched in the lower reaches of the FA Carling Premiership. Squandered chances and lost points can play havoc with the nervous systems of the most robust player and the most resolute manager.

However, what the threat of a loss of status does produce often makes for engrossing viewing, as similarly afflicted clubs engage in the football equivalent of mortal combat. Those at the opposite end of the Premiership should be wary, too, as the strugglers suddenly discover reserves of strength. Thus the matches played on Wednesday night provided a mix to be savoured.

Middlesbrough, bottom of the Premiership pile, produced the most startling performance, brushing aside

Derby County 6-1 at the Riverside Stadium in a dress rehearsal for the FA Cup quarter-final at the Baseball Ground tomorrow. It was their third win in 21 league outings.

Though they remain rooted to the foot of the table, courtesy of the three points that the club had deducted for failing to turn up for a match against Blackburn Rovers in December, Bryan Robson, the Middlesbrough player-manager, exhibited a rare optimistic air.

"It's only the start," he said, "and we've got to build on this. The attitude from the players was excellent and it would be nice if they could prove wrong a few of their critics."

Robson still has problems, though. Vladimir Kinder, Gianluca Festa, Emerson, Derek Whyte, Steve Vickers and Nigel Pearson are nursing injuries, with Kinder.

Whyte and Emerson unlikely to have recovered in time for the Cup rematch.

Reports have also re-emerged that Fabrizio Ravanelli, who scored his third hat-trick of the season to take his tally to 24, is again being wooed by a host of Italian clubs, including Internazionale and AS Roma. Emerson is apparently attracting interest from Italy, too, with José Veiga, his agent, believed to have spoken to Lazio and Parma this week.

Southampton and Everton shared four goals at The Dell, with Southampton boldly retrieving a 2-0 half-time deficit, but Nottingham Forest's plight worsened with a 3-0 home defeat by Sheffield Wednesday. "We've scored only 24 times in 28 games and that's relegation stuff," Dave Bassett, the recently-appointed Forest general manager, said. "That's our problem and it's painful to see."

"We obviously need a striker but we could do with a defender and a midfielder player as well. At this stage of the season, though, it's not easy to buy. Who is going to give you or sell you players? Very few."

Southampton, trailing to the team that put seven goals past them in November, recovered through Slater's first goal for the club and Short's own-goal.

Leicester City surely ended any lingering doubts about their ability to retain top-flight status with a 1-0 victory against Aston Villa at Filbert Street, the defeat also denting Villa's hopes of claiming a UEFA Cup place.

"We're getting a bit closer to safety but we can't rest yet," Martin O'Neill, the Leicester manager, said. Steve Claridge, a second-half substitute, scored the decisive goal. Blackburn Rovers also appear to be edging away from danger after a 1-1 draw against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge. "We probably need two or three more wins before we can feel secure, but we're on the right track," Tony Parkes, the Blackburn caretaker manager, said. Rovers have lost only three out of 17 league games since Parkes, who will be replaced by Roy Hodgson next season, took over from Ray Harford in October.

Skifful Carbone rising in stature

Brian Glanville on the little Italian forward making a big impression

Benito Carbone, Sheffield Wednesday's tiny Italian forward, has returned after a hernia operation in double-quick time. It is a boost on two fronts: two goals against Nottingham Forest on Wednesday lifted his team to seventh place in the FA Carling Premiership, and Carbone plays against Wimbledon on Sunday with an FA Cup semi-final place at stake. No wonder Wednesday see him as a model professional, an assiduous trainer, a fine example to younger players.

Carbone was 13 when he joined Torino, moving to Turin — where his sister lived — from Bagnara Calabra, deep in the south of Italy. Several other clubs, AC Milan and Juventus among them, had spotted his promise, but it was Torino who moved in first.

That was in 1984, but Carbone would not gain a regular place in Torino's Serie A team until 1993. He made three appearances in the 1988-89 season, five the next season in Serie B, and was then passed around the peninsula like a parcel.

A season each with Reggina, Casertana and Ascoli, all in Serie B, followed until Torino picked him up again. Too late. By then they were in financial chaos and soon had to sell him to Napoli, who, in turn, fell deep into debt and had to sell him to Internazionale. He would go back to Naples tomorrow if he could, he said, but, adaptable to a degree, he seems content in Sheffield. David Platt, Wednesday's resilient manager, thinks that it is just the place for him. "He really gives the impression he still wants to listen and learn," Platt said. "He came over not as an older statesman, more as a lively, bright guy looking for adventure, and Sheffield is possibly a good place for him to start, as opposed to a big city, where he'd be under the spotlight."

Fluent and charming, but sharply aware of those who have done him wrong, Car-



Carbone has proved a model professional since joining Sheffield Wednesday

bone, 25, finds much to admire, and marvel at, in English football, but he deplores its defences. "I'd watched English football already on television," he said. "It's not dirty, it's very rugged. There are more tackles, but always on the ball. The players are not malicious, they are decisive. They never stop running... pum, pum, pum! Incredible."

"Here they train very little. I don't know how they manage to run so much. Technically and tactically, the difference is in defence. The Italians are much better prepared defensively. In Italy, to win a game is very difficult." Carbone, who prefers to play off the centre forward, has touch, flair, intelligence and a spirit of adventure. "Good technique," Platt said, "prepared to try the audacious. Someone who is obviously willing to express himself and is begging me to allow him to express himself."

He's got to be more goal-conscious and I think he can be. The admiration is reciprocal. "Up to now he hasn't made a single mistake," Carbone said of Platt. "He is very intelligent: above all, tactically."

Carbone has scored surprisingly few goals, just 15 in his three seasons in Serie B, then three in Serie A for Torino and four for Napoli. Last season, with Inter, he scored just a couple. "I have always sacrificed myself for the team," he said. "I go out and get the ball on the wing. I played at Caserta, Campioli got 25 goals, Ascoli, Bieri got 22 goals, Torino, Branca got 19. I play more for the team than myself. It's in my character to produce more assists than goals."

He felt badly treated at Inter, where he was seldom allowed to play in his favourite position by Roy Hodgson,

their English manager, and lost his place to Yuri Djorkaeff. "I found myself out of the team," Carbone said, "and I thought it better to have a change of air, because those people don't deserve me."

He is delighted that Cesare Maldini has taken over as coach of the Italian national team. "I remember him with affection because I had a marvellous year with him," he said. "We won the European under-21 championship. I am sure he will win something. Why? Because he doesn't exclude class players from his teams."

"If he chose [Roberto] Baggio or [Gianfranco] Zola, they'd be left to play as they know how. It's very important that a player like Zola can go on the field and do what he wants. It's very important that players like me can play like that. Free in our heads to do what we have in our minds."

Midlands club is forced into drastic cutbacks

Non-League Football by Walter Gamble

THE next three fixtures for Bromsgrove Rovers provide a timely lifeline for the Worcestershire club, whose season-long struggle in the Vauxhall Conference has been thrown into sharp relief by the revelation of financial problems so severe as to force Brian Kenning, the manager, to place his entire squad of contracted players on the transfer list.

Tomorrow Bromsgrove travel to Bath City, who are points below them at the foot of the table, with victory vital in their attempt to close the five-point gap with the teams above them, lying as they do in the third relegation position. Tomorrow week, Bromsgrove play host to the other team below them, Rushden and Diamonds.

In between, on Tuesday, they meet their local rivals, Kidderminster Harriers, at the Victoria Ground in the most important money-spinning fixture of their season. Last season, the match on Boxing Day attracted 4,398. The match at Kidderminster last Boxing Day drew more than 6,000.

Keith MacMaster, the chairman, expects the crowd to be 3,500 and his message to the townspeople is simple: "If you want a football club in Bromsgrove, come along and support us." A drastic cut in the playing budget and "a tightening up on expenditure in all directions" is in store for next season.

"It's been coming on since we joined the Conference five years ago," MacMaster said. "We've been fortunate enough in previous seasons to sell players like Scott Cooksey, Steve Taylor and Martin O'Connor to Football League clubs, which has been a big help to cashflow, but we haven't sold anybody for the past two years."

"With our situation in the league, gates have been plummeting as well. We've been averaging around 700 this season compared to 1,100 last season."

The only player to have attracted interest so far is Adie Smith, a 22-year-old utility player, for whom the club has turned down offers from Kidderminster and Kettering Town. As for Kenning, MacMaster said: "He understands the situation. As he said to me, he's a fighter not a quitter."

O'Neill in trouble for McGhee 'joke'

By Richard Hobson

MARTIN O'NEILL, the Leicester City manager, could face Football Association charges after appearing to encourage supporters to give Mark McGhee, his predecessor, a hostile reception if McGhee brings Wolverhampton Wanderers to Filbert Street next season.

McGhee left Leicester to become the manager at Millwall in December 1995 after just a year in charge and has acknowledged since that City supporters had reason to feel aggrieved at his departure. Wolves have improved markedly under his charge and lie second in the Nationwide League first division, well placed for promotion to the FA Carling Premiership.

O'Neill's comments were made in the final paragraph of his programme notes for the game on Wednesday night against Aston Villa, whose own manager, Brian Little, preceded McGhee at Leicester.

Addressing supporters, O'Neill wrote: "We have enough to concern ourselves

this season without venting any more anger on Brian and we should applaud him the respect his achievements deserve. However, what you wish to do is when Mark McGhee visits us with Wolves is entirely at your own discretion."

Yesterday afternoon, a spokesman for Wolves denied earlier suggestions that McGhee was taking legal advice over the article. Steve Double, the FA spokesman, said that the FA would investigate if it received a complaint while O'Neill insisted that the remark was "tongue in cheek". The Leicestershire Constabulary does not intend to take any action.

It would be ironic if O'Neill found himself on a disrepute charge over something meant as a joke, having been let off for his verbal attack on Mike Reed, the referee who awarded the penalty that led to Leicester's exit from the FA Cup at Chelsea a week earlier. O'Neill described Reed's decision as "unbelievable" and "an absolute disgrace".

FOR THE RECORD

BASKETBALL

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION (NSA): New York 100 Toronto 84, Cleveland 85 Indiana 78, Chicago 111 San Antonio 66, Detroit 92 Minnesota 88, Portland 121 Phoenix 99, Utah 88 Dallas 66, Houston 80 Cleveland 84, Sacramento 103 Denver 100.

BOWLS

YORK: EWBA national championships: Triples: Final: Cambridge Chatterton (1) beat Egham (2) 3-1. Singles: Final: 1st round: 1. McAlister and D. French (Rotherham) 2. McAlister and D. 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BOXING

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David Powell, athletics correspondent, previews the world indoor championships

Smith and Baulch aiming to cash in on new incentives

THE outside of the house was bright and fresh but the inside was beginning to look shabby. Then along came Primo Nebiolo with his decorators, papering the interior walls with money. Now the indoor world championships are a respectable companion for the outdoor version. When the indoor championships were last staged, two years ago in Barcelona, only one world record was set, and that was in an under-developed event, the women's triple jump. While the field events were of a good standard, the track racing was, at best, patchy.

The absence of Michael Johnson and Svetlana Masterkova, the International Amateur Athletic Federation's (IAAF) male and female athletes of 1996, from the sixth indoor championships, taking place in Paris over the next three days, is disappointing but not worth dwelling on. The list of luminaries that are taking part is too long to pack into one sentence here.

These are the first IAAF world championships to pay prize-money, \$50,000 (about £31,000) to winners, \$50,000 to world record breakers, \$60,000 to victorious relay teams. The pay compares favourably with awards for the outdoor world championships in Athens this summer, where winners will receive \$60,000, plus \$100,000 for a world record.

The currency of conversation remains medals, not dollars, however, and finding an athlete prepared to say that he or she is here for the money is as unlikely as being able to persuade Nebiolo, the IAAF president, to remove the second word from his governing body's name. Steve Smith, one of two Great Britain athletes going into the championships as a favourite, almost admitted it yesterday, but stopped short.

Smith, the Olympic high jump bronze medal-winner, said: "\$50,000 would go a long way to securing my future and

that is how I thought of it at the start of the season. But now what excites me is taking the title."

If successful, Smith would at last deliver on the potential he showed in 1992 when, after a memorable duel with Tim Forsyth, of Australia, he won the world junior title. He has yet to win a senior one, but has silver or bronze medal from each of the four main outdoor championships.

"I have taken enough medals, there has got to be a time when I start taking titles," he said yesterday.



Smith: favourite

He is in superb form and would be entering the competition as world No 1 for the year — the only man to clear 2.34 metres, not once but twice — had Forsyth, his old foe, not sneaked in a 2.36 jump in the last few days.

When Smith, displaying confidence bordering on arrogance, was asked how he would spend the \$50,000, Dalton Grant, his team-mate, sparked to life. "Hey, hey," he said, insulted at the suggestion he himself might not win. Grant, too, has been jumping well, twice over 2.33 metres, and has the advantage of knowing that, on the last occasion of an international championship in the Palais Omnisports, it was he who won.

Up against the British pair is Charles Austin, one of several

Olympic champions on parade. But, in the absence of Johnson and Masterkova (Michael and Svetlana), Britain's prospects of striking gold have been enhanced.

It is not Colin Jackson, the 60 metre hurdles world record holder, who is Britain's other gold medal favourite, but Jamie Baulch, the 400 metre runner he coaches. Unbeaten in six indoor finals at the two-lap distance this season, and having set a British record of 45.39sec, Baulch acknowledged yesterday that his main opposition was likely to come from the Americans, even though Darnell Hall, the world champion, did not make the team.

Instead Baulch faces Derek Mills and Dion Minor, neither of whom have broken 46sec this season. Allen Johnson, Jackson's successor as the world's pre-eminent sprint hurdler, failed to qualify for the United States trials, but Reggie Torian, another American, has popped up with a fast time, and Anier Garcia, from Cuba, is the athlete in form.

Ashtia Hansen is likely to find Inna Lasovskaya, from Russia, dominant in the triple jump but the Briton should win a medal. Any other British medals, apart from in the relays, would be unexpected.

The first day highlight is the men's 60 metres, in which Bruny Surin's chances of a third successive title for Canada are all the greater for the withdrawal of Ato Boldon, from Trinidad, on discovering that, to run both sprints, he would have to race five times today. He will concentrate on the 200 metres.

"I did not know about it until I got here," Boldon said. "If I had I would have done a Michael Johnson and I feel cheated."

Jason Livingston, in his first championship since returning from a drugs ban, said yesterday that he was optimistic of winning a medal.



George's world-record performances have helped to raise the international profile of her fledgling event

Flying circus girl hits new heights

She flies through the air with the greatest of ease. The daring young girl on the flying trapeze

The daring Australian is still propelling herself through the air, but in her national athletics vest, rather than the uniform of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus. Emma George, once a child trapeze artist, is expected to be the star turn this weekend in the newest event at the world indoor athletics championships: the women's pole vault.

After setting ten world records, George finally has the chance to show what she can do in an international championship event. A trapeze performer at first, then a

sprinter, it is the combination of these talents that has turned her into an overnight success.

"If I had not been a trapeze artist, I would not be vaulting like I am now," George, 22, said yesterday. "The aerial sense is so important. But not only do I have a gymnastic background, I was also a sprinter and the two combine very well."

Although there are more incentives than ever for athletes to trim world records, rather than savage them, George is too new to professional sport to be tainted by Sergey Bubka-style cynicism. Bubka raises the pole vault world record a centimetre at a time to maximise his earnings, and with bonuses on offer at the world championships for the first time, as well as at Grand Prix meetings, George might be tempted to follow suit. "No," she insists.

When she set an outdoor world record of 4.55 metres in Melbourne two weeks ago, George moved the mark up five centimetres. Nobody knows how good women can be at pole vaulting and George is in a hurry to soar close to the limits.

"I am not in it to make money," she said. "If we put it [the world record] up a centimetre at a time, it is going to be years before it becomes a legitimate event." The prize-money and world record bonuses payments on offer are

only half those paid in long-standing events.

Is George complaining? "Not at all," she said. "Even with half prize-money, that is a bonus." Riches, indeed, beyond her imagination when she was last in Paris, a year before she discovered pole vaulting. That was in 1993. Nursing her back-packer's budget, she lived on French sticks, cheese and nutty chocolate.

They were frugal days, but cheerful days, in one way at least. "I am not allowed to eat chocolate anymore," George said. "The heavier you are, the more weight you have to carry over the bar."

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Country practice may get London setting

By David Powell

IT MAY be not much more than a germ of an idea at the moment, but the notion of the world cross-country championships taking place in central London, far away from the sport's rustic roots, has won support from leading officials in the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) and British Athletic Federation (BAF): in the case of the IAAF, the leading official.

"If we can put something [a bid] together like Hyde Park, the international federation would jump at it," Ken Rickhuss, the BAF chairman, said. He was responding to the decision to take the world championships to a city centre for the first time — to Turin this month — because Primo Nebiolo, the IAAF president, hopes that, by doing so, it will raise the discipline's traditionally low profile.

Put to the IAAF, the response was that Nebiolo had thought of it already. The earliest that the championships could be staged in London would be 2001, unless political unrest were to force Belfast to withdraw as the host in 1999. The BAF would then need an alternative.

Turin may prove popular with spectators on March 23, but one man who believes that cross country on concrete is "just ludicrous" is David Clarke, the Great Britain team manager — one reason being that it will cost the earth. Or, rather, the earth will cost.

In the Parco del Valentino, the championships will take another long, sweeping turn away from tradition as lorry loads of earth are moved at huge expense to cover the extensive concrete areas in an attempt to turn the site into something resembling a cross-country course.

"It could be a fast, continental world championships course — if the grass grows properly and it is not too wet," Clarke said, his cynicism obvious.

Otto Klappert, the chairman of the IAAF's cross-country committee, has voiced fears that, if it rains, "we could have problems".

FULL DETAILS OF INDOOR RECORDS AND WORLD RANKINGS

<p>In each event the world record is given first, followed by the European record and the British record.</p> <p>Men</p> <p>60 metres 6.41 A Cason (US) 1992 6.47 L Christie (GB) 1995 6.47 L Christie 1995</p> <p>100 metres 10.49 A Cason (US) 1992 10.51 L Christie (GB) 1995 10.51 L Christie 1995</p> <p>200 metres 19.92 A Cason (US) 1992 20.26 L Christie (GB) 1995 20.26 L Christie 1995</p> <p>400 metres 44.53 M Johnson (US) 1995</p>	<p>45.05 T Schoenlebe (EC) 1988 45.36 J Baulch (GB) 1997 1997 RANKINGS: 45.36 J Baulch (GB); 45.37 D Mills (US); 45.38 R Mutch (GB); 45.39 T Schoenlebe (EC); 45.40 M Johnson (US); 45.41 M Johnson (US); 45.42 M Johnson (US); 45.43 M Johnson (US); 45.44 M Johnson (US); 45.45 M Johnson (US); 45.46 M Johnson (US); 45.47 M Johnson (US); 45.48 M Johnson (US); 45.49 M Johnson (US); 45.50 M Johnson (US); 45.51 M Johnson (US); 45.52 M Johnson (US); 45.53 M Johnson (US); 45.54 M Johnson (US); 45.55 M Johnson (US); 45.56 M Johnson (US); 45.57 M Johnson (US); 45.58 M Johnson (US); 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